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2000AD TIMELINE INSIDE!

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INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW

Anthrax's Scott Ian & Metallica's Kirk Hammetts Passion for Comics

ISSN 2517-6447

Comic Scene | Volume 2 Issue 9 | December 2019

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  by Stu Perrins and Israel Huretas

When a mysterious blue light illuminates the skies of a small English town, science fiction fan Dexter and reluctant pal Henry embark on a torch lit adventure in the search of little green men. However, as they soon discover, not all alien life is as cute and gentle than ET would have you believe.

- **Gallant and Amos**
  by Rob Barnes

'Gallant and Amos' is a comic about two guys travelling around a medieval world and stumbling into crazy adventures and events. Oh! and did we mention one is a Knight and the other a Dragon?

WHACKOMAN!
BY MARC JACKSON
THANKS for ASKING ME TO DINNER, WHACKOMAN. THIS IS SUCH A FANCY RESTAURANT! I'D OUR ME FLATTERED!
MY PLEASURE, SHEILA! I SEE IT AS MY CIVIC DUTY!
PLUS, GIRL, YOU IS HOT!
WITT! WOO!
MILDLY OFFENSIVE! BUT I'LL LET THAT ONE SLIDE. IF YOU TURN A BLIND EYE FROM WHAT'S ABOUT TO GO DOWN...
SOUNDS SAUCY! WHAT DO YOU HAVE IN MIND?
WELL, YOU COULD A DISTRACTION WHILST I PUT THE SILVERWARE INTO MY PURSE!
NOT WHAT I IMAGINED. BUT LET'S SEE WHERE THIS GOES!
GUH
CLINK!
HMMMM... SOMETHING IS AMISS HERE!
THIS DATE FEELS WEIRD EVEN FOR MY STANDARDS!
CLINK! CLINK!
HOLD THE PHONE, AND CALL ME JOAN!...
ARE YOU SHEILA THE STEALER?!
YURK!

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- **Whackoman!**
  by Marc Jackson

Superhero fun in one perfect page will be joined by our ComicScene regulars Alan Holloway and Ed Doyle 'Scene It Before' and Jim Wilkins 'Deja Who'!

- **Slash Moron**
  by Bambos Georgiou, James Hansen and John Burns

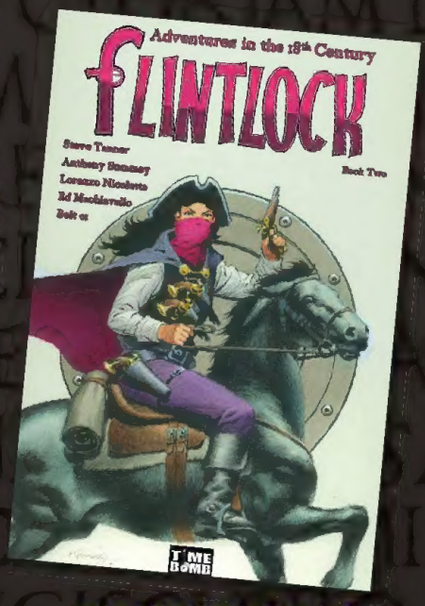
From the team being the Wallace and Gromit comic strips comes a slapstick space opera spoof for all ages.

And that's not all. Inside ComicScene magazine we have strips including;

- **Captain Cosmic Book 2**
  by Andy W Clift

The Cosmic's are BACK for a brand new silver aged inspired, galactic adventure. If you're new to this series, then let me tell you what this is all about. The Adventures of Captain Cosmic is a silver age inspired, space adventure series. The series follows the exploits of Captain Cosmic & Kid Cosmic, a father / daughter superhero team that defend the galaxy from space age super villains and galactic evil doers!

All communication has been cut off from Devron VII, a remote colony on the very edge of Commonwealth space. No one knows what has happened to the inhabitant. The galactic guardians known as Captain Cosmic and Kid Cosmic have been dispatched to investigate. What they find not only is their most dangerous mission, but possibly the most dangerous to the galaxy! What has happened to the people of Devron VII? Will the Cosmics be able to save the day and the galaxy?! Find out in DANGER OF DEVRON VII!!



- **Lady Flintlock Book 2**
  by Steve Tanner, Anthony Summey and Bolt 01

Return to the 18th Century, with the second book in the unique Flintlock anthology series!

- **Rok of the Reds**
  by Judge Dredd co-creator John Wagner, Alan Grant and Dan Cornwell

Welcome to the world's first alien footballer

ROK of arkady, an alien shape-changer on the run from dangerous assassins, seeks refuge in the far reaches of the galaxy, alighting on a small and insignificant planet – Earth.

To conceal his presence ROK adopts the identity of the first person he encounters – bad boy footballer Kyle Dixon.

Can ROK steer lowly radford reds to an unlikely cup win – or will the assassins find him and bring his footballing career to a shuddering end?

Don't forget during the summer we have a **half price back Issue Sale** – and an opportunity to pick up Book 1 of both Captain Cosmic, Lady Flintlock and the fabulous Milford Green.

Don't miss an issue and be part of the Legion of Comic Fans subscribe at **www.getmycomics.com/ComicScene**

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42 ZARJAZ YEARS

2000AD is forty two years old! Chris Hallam presents a quick run down of just SOME of the many highlights so far....

Artwork: Tara Gray

• 1977

2000AD, The Galaxy's Greatest comic is launched. Prog 1 is 8p (Earth money) and a space spinner appears as a free gift. Tharg the Mighty is established as the comic's editor. The opening line-up includes The Harlem Heroes, dino-drama, Flesh! and a revived darker version of Eagle hero, Dan Dare.

However, it is futuristic lawman Judge Dredd created by Pat Mills, John Wagner and Carlos Ezquerra which debuts in Prog 2 which soon steals the show. It is the only one of these stories to survive the Seventies and which along with Tharg himself is still in 2000AD today.

Artwork: Tara Gray

• 1978

Dredd braves The Cursed Earth and the mad tyrant, Chief Judge Cal in his first two mega-epics.

Starlord, a short-lived sister paper merges into 2000AD. Ro-Jaws and Hammerstein stars of Ro-Busters later become popular, recurrent characters in both ABC Warriors and Nemesis. Strontium Dog featuring Johnny Alpha joins too and ultimately becomes one of 2000AD's most enduring strips.

• 1979

Tornado, another short-lived sister paper, folds into 2000AD, the second and, to date, last time this ever happens.

Future wars rage in both The VCs and The ABC Warriors.

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Artwork: Sinclair Elliott

• 1981

Dredd arrests young perp, Marlon Shakespeare ('Chopper') in Unamerican Graffiti.

Nu-Earth's Genetic Infantryman, Rogue Trooper goes into battle.

Pat Mills' Nemesis the Warlock also gets his first full length adventure while Ace Trucking Co. also goes into business.

• 1980

A big year for Dredd goes in search of The Judge Child and runs into the Angel Gang. Back in the city, he encounters Judge Death and Cassandra Anderson for the first time.

More horrors of war in Fiends of the Eastern Front.

• 1983

Pat Mills' Slaine brings a touch of Celtic fantasy to proceedings.

Alan Moore's alien Skizz appears as his D.R. and Quinch also start raising hell.

Artwork: Sean Steele

• 1984

Nemesis reunites The ABC Warriors in The Gothic Empire.

Moore and Gibson's The Ballad of Halo Jones begins.

• 1985

Judge Anderson finally gets her own series.

The original versions of Robohunter and Gerry Finley-Day's Rogue Trooper both end.

• 1986

Diceman, a new monthly hopes to capitalise on the RPG craze. Its luck runs out after just five issues.

Private Halo Jones goes to war in what proves to be Alan Moore's 2000AD swansong.

Prog 500! Pete Milligan and Brendan McCarthy form Bad Company. Slaine The King's reign begins.

Artwork: Ed Doyle

• 1989

Slaine, the Horned God begins. Pat Mills and Simon Bisley go into warp spasm as do many readers.

His boy Friday: Dave Gibbons and Will Simpson give Rogue Trooper a major reboot.

Nemesis, Book Nine, concludes.

Who is The Dead Man? A "new" character walks into town.

Artwork: Tara Gray

• 1987

Ten years in, 2000AD is revamped with a new boxier logo, larger pages and more colour.

Zenith, a new kind of superhero and popstar emerges from the minds of Grant Morrison and artist Steve Yeowell.

Dredd battles old rival, Chopper and new foe, the Judda in Oz.

The ABC Warriors return at last now drawn by Simon Bisley and the mysterious very early text messager, SMS.

• 1988

Alan Grant and Simon Harrison begin The Final Solution for Strontium Dog.

Prog 600! The comic's cover goes shiny.

Artwork: Ed Doyle

• 1990

2000AD's toughest decade begins…

Judge Dredd The Megazine is launched. By far the most successful 2000AD spin-off comic, it continues to this day.

In the regular comic, Dredd battles the Dark Judges in the Wagner and Ezquerra mega-epic, Necropolis.

Johnny Alpha dies at the end of Strontium Dog: The Final Solution. Or does he?

Artwork: Sinclair Elliott

• 2015

Artist Brett Ewins dies: Steve Dillon also passes on the following year.

• 2010

Artist John Hicklenton dies.

• 2009

A new book, David Bishop's Thrill Power Overload, a history of 2000AD is published.

Cradlegrave: John Smith brings a welcome dose of horror.

• 2017

The comic celebrates 40 years of thrill-power.

• 2018

Carlos Ezquerra dies.

• 2012

Karl Urban stars in a new film, Dredd, directed by Pete Travis. It performs only moderately well at the box office but is critically much better received than the earlier Stallone film.

In the comic, Dredd stars in the highly acclaimed, Trifecta.

• 2006

Acclaimed Origins story explaining Dredd's background begins.

Kingdom from Dan Abnett and Richard Elson is launched.

• 2007

Steampunk series, Stickleback arrives. Italian-born artist Massimo Berlardinelli dies.

• 2001

Shakara arrives courtesy of Robbie Morrison and Henry Flint.

• 2004

Edgar Wright and Simon Pegg pen a special tie-in story for their film, Shaun of the Dead.

• 1991

2000AD goes all-colour. Hewligan's Haircut by Pete Milligan and future Gorillaz artist Jamie Hewlett arrives as does a new ABC Warriors strip.

Dredd meets Batman in the Judgement on Gotham graphic novel.

Mark Millar revives Sam Slade: Robohunter. Some wish he hadn't.

• 1992

Button Man by John Wagner and Arthur Ranson appears.

Dredd epic Judgement Day marks the first 2000AD/Judge Dredd Megazine crossover.

Artwork: Ian Beadle

• 1993

A much hyped Summer Offensive yields mixed results. The Dredd story Inferno, John Smith's future sport saga Slaughterbowl and Mark Millar's Maniac 5 do okay. The druggy Really & Truly and the controversial Big Dave do less well.

Fantasy series Firekind is disrupted when an episode is accidentally published out of sequence.

• 1994

Prog 900! Dredd and Rogue Trooper meet in a special one-off 28 page story.

An expensive but little seen TV commercial for the comic is aired on Sky Sports.

• 1995

Sinister Dexter begins.

The long-awaited Judge Dredd film directed by Danny Cannon and starring Sylvester Stallone is finally released. It is a critical and commercial disappointment.

Artwork: Ed Doyle

• 1996

The Pit reaches its end. It is the longest running Dredd strip ever up to that point.

Mazeworld appears from Alan Grant and Arthur Ranson.

Prog 1,000…

• 1997

Dredd kisses an actual woman in Beyond The Call of Duty.

Unusually, the comic runs a full length adaptation of the early Danny Boyle film, A Life Less Ordinary (which ultimately flops at the box office).

Nikolai Dante begins, a notable success at a time when the comic is really struggling.

• 1999

Another Dredd mega-epic, Doomsday appears in a crossover with the Megazine.

Bisexual vampire Devlin Waugh transfers to 2000AD from the Megazine.

A final 100 page special 'Prog 2000' ends the decade, finishing off Nemesis which had been revived. Johnny Alpha also returns in a Strontium Dog special by Wagner and Ezquerra which explains away his death (widely regarded as a mistake by the comic)

• 2000

What will 2000AD be called in 2000AD? Finally, readers get an answer to the age-old question: It is still called 2000AD.

Rebellion take over the comic, a development generally seen as triggering a revival in 2000AD's fortunes.

Author: Chris Hallam | **Twitter:** @Moviebore

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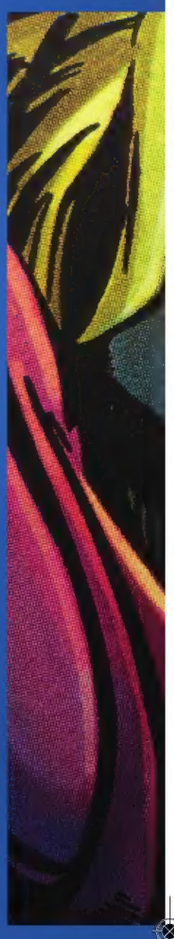
HALO JONES



Hoop Dreams

The Halo Jones Story

There were many strange creatures stalking the pages of 2000AD in the year 1984. October would see Nemesis the Warlock confronting the Victorian-influenced alien oddities of the Gothic Empire, while readers had grown familiar with a whole host of aliens and weirdos while perusing the adventures of Judge Dredd, Slaine and Rogue Trooper.

But in Prog 376 in July 1984, they encountered the strangest creature of all: an actual human woman. She and others like her, appeared in a new story, The Ballad of Halo Jones.

The Galaxy's Greatest Comic was seven years old by this point and had, of course, featured a number of female characters already, notably Judge Dredd's sassy, psychic chum, Judge Cassandra Anderson, who was destined to get her own strip the following year. But Halo was undeniably something new: a female-centric strip, dominated by female characters.

We meet Halo as a teenager, one of a group of friends, plus Toby, a robot dog, who live on the Hoop, an artificial population centre constructed off Manhattan Island in the 50th century. Essentially, a dump for society's unemployed, the Hoop is a breeding ground for crime, strange youth cults, racial/inter-species and sexual tensions and occasional outbreaks of violence. For Halo and her girlfriends (she is not yet a very distinctive character), even a simple shopping expedition has the feel of a military campaign.

Halo Jones was not, in fact, woman-born, but was the creation of Northampton-based comic legend Alan Moore and artist Ian Gibson. Then in his early thirties, Moore was fast making a name for himself as a writer thanks to stories like V For Vendetta and Marvelman (later Miracleman) in Warrior and had established himself in 2000AD with D.R and Quinch, Skizz and a host of Tharg's Futureshocks. One of these, 1981's 'Grawks Bearing Gifts' (in which some seemingly daft amiable aliens manage to enslave humanity) had seen

him collaborate with Ian Gibson, best known as the illustrator of Sam Slade: Robohunter. Together, they would create Halo.

"I more or less decided that all the central characters would be female," Moore said, admitting to being influenced by female-dominated US strip, Love & Rockets. There would be few captions or thought bubbles either. "I'd simply dump the reader right in the middle of a busy and bustling future world and leave them to figure it out for themselves."

"Where did she go? OUT," said Halo's first 2000AD cover. "What did she do? EVERYTHING." If the beginning of this ("Where did she go? OUT!") sounded a bit like a chant released during a strike, this was not inappropriate. The story's run was interrupted by a bout of industrial action which shut down 2000AD for a month.

It was not, at first, a big hit. Lance Parkin in his biography of Alan Moore writes: "Now, Halo Jones is regularly cited as a high point of the magazine's long history. Then, it was a different story. Every week, the magazine polled its readers on their favourite strips, and Halo Jones was notably unpopular during its first run."

"A lot of readers just didn't understand what we trying to do," said Moore, speaking unintentionally in rhyme, "which is something you always run the risk of when you try something new."

> "A lot of readers just didn't understand what we were trying to do..."

Some thought the problem was that the characters were female. Others disliked the use of futuristic slang ("First we hop the updraft at fuller web/west 15th, and get up onto the overstrat...Then, assuming there aren't too many dreck-netters, we...walk casually past the jackyards on West 24th") although actually bearing in mind, the strip is set nearly three thousand years in the future, it's surprising it's as comprehensible as it is. Others pointed to a lack of "action". Moore felt they meant a lack of "violence". And he was probably right.

Moore and Gibson were both unhappy to have to tone down the slang and slightly increase the level of ...action...for Book 2 which ran in 1985. It might seem odd to hear this as for the most part, Halo Jones Book 2, which sees our heroine spending a year

> "By the late eighties, Halo had become something of a cult, inspiring stage plays and an album track."

working aboard a galactic cruise liner, the Clara Pandy, is very good indeed. Both it and Book 3 itself and Moore and Gibson won a string of Eagle Awards. A number of stand-alone episodes particularly stand out, notably the prologue set even further in the future which suggests Halo is destined to become a figure of some historical import. Another memorable episode features the sexually androgynous and wholly anonymous Glyph. The story also sees a final reckoning in Halo's relationship with Toby the dog.

In Book 3, published over fifteen parts in 1986, Moore and Gibson achieved a level of excellence never seen before in 2000AD. A decade has passed and we meet an older more cynical Halo who is persuaded to join the army, by her friend, the soap opera obsessed giantess, Toy Molto. This turns out to be a bad move.

The two soon find themselves assigned to fight in a horrendous Vietnam-in-space style conflict in the Tarantula Nebula, a conflict alluded to occasionally since Book 1.

Again, individual episodes stand out. In one, Halo and her platoon (again, all female) attempt to assuage their guilt after they realise they have been involved in the death of a child soldier. She must have been older than she looked, they reason. "The engine got older on the way home." Halo recalls. "By the time we reached base she'd practically died of old age." She also travels to Warzone One, the planet Moab, particularly leads to "the Crush" in which the incredibly strong gravity of the large planet leads time to be distorted. This leads the conflict to literally be appearing to pass either in slow motion or sometimes even accelerated speed before the participants' eyes.

By the late eighties, Halo had become something of a cult, inspiring stage plays and an album track by pop band Transvision Vamp. Editor Steve MacManus was desperate for more, as were readers excited by talk of a nine-volume saga. Artist Ian Gibson was also keen to continue the extensive plans he and Moore had made for the strip during a visit to Moore's Northampton lair in the early Eighties. The artist had found Book 3 an especially emotional experience, one which, he argues, possibly contributed to the end of his marriage.

But it was the end of the road. By 1986, Moore (now producing The Watchmen) had become a keen champion of creator rights. He fell out dramatically with 2000AD over the issue.

"I'd got plans to have her grow up and eventually end as an old woman," Moore said in 2006. "But I got to the point where I'd said to IPC, 'Look, you know that you've ripped these characters off from us. If you were to give us the rights back, I would gladly write another three books of Halo Jones. Whereas if you don't I will never write Halo Jones and you won't get any money from the character. And they thought, 'Yeah, let's hang on to the character forever and you never get any rights to it and never write any again.' So that's where it is."

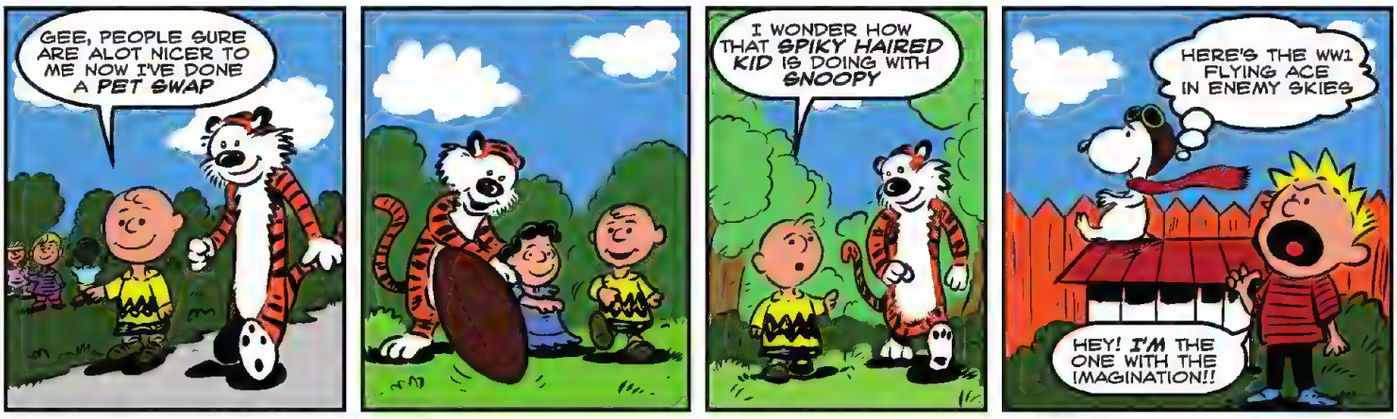
Ian Gibson (now in his seventies) has occasionally attempted to revive the strip but has not spoken to Moore in thirty years. "I think he's betrayed the audience with his attitude," says Gibson of Moore. "But that's purely between me and him."

As it stands, the series will probably never return. But if 2000AD lasts a thousand years, it is doubtful anyone will ever forget The Ballad of Halo Jones.

Author: Chris Hallam | **Twitter:** @Moviebore

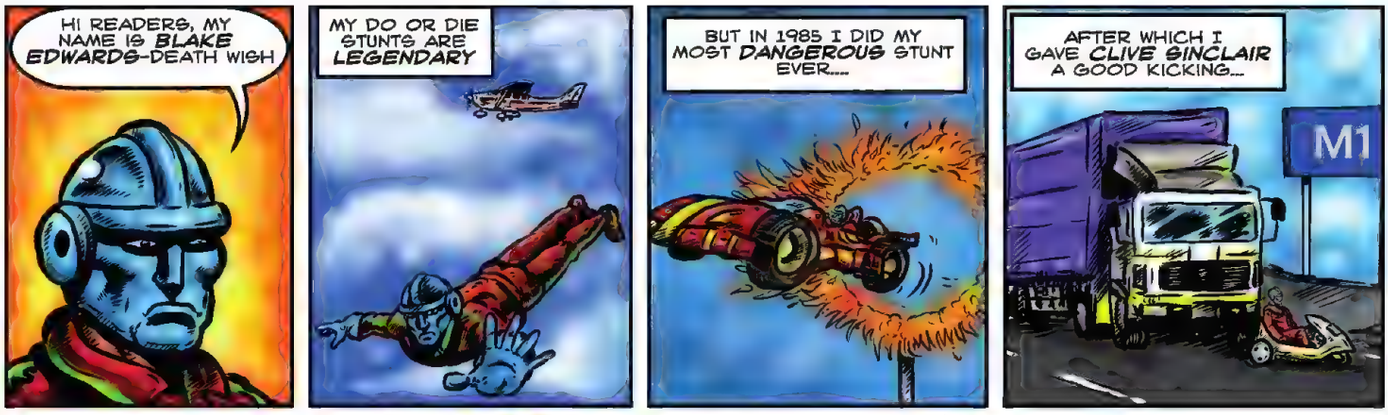
SCENE IT BEFORE: CROSSOVER

SCRIPT: ALAN HOLLOWAY
ART: ED DOYLE


GEE, PEOPLE SURE ARE ALOT NICER TO ME NOW I'VE DONE A PET SWAP
I WONDER HOW THAT SPIKY HAIRED KID IS DOING WITH SNOOPY
HERE'S THE WW1 FLYING ACE IN ENEMY SKIES
HEY! I'M THE ONE WITH THE IMAGINATION!!

SCENE IT BEFORE: TO THE DEATH

SCRIPT: ALAN HOLLOWAY
ART: ED DOYLE


HI READERS, MY NAME IS BLAKE EDWARDS-DEATH WISH
MY DO OR DIE STUNTS ARE LEGENDARY
BUT IN 1985 I DID MY MOST DANGEROUS STUNT EVER.....
AFTER WHICH I GAVE CLIVE SINCLAIR A GOOD KICKING...
M1

SOCCER STRIPS BY KEN REID PART TWO

ONE AFTERNOON, IN THE LOCAL LIBRARY...
(SNARL!) ALL THIS VILE LITERATURE, ENCOURAGING INNOCENT PEOPLE TO PLAY FOOTBALL!
SILENCE
SPORT
FOOTBALL
SNORT
GRR! I'VE GOT TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC!
I'LL REMOVE THEM FROM THIS SECTION, AN' MIX 'EM UP WITH POEMS AN' LYRICS!
TUG
FOOT
THE POETRY SECTIONS BY THE WINDOW!
SOCCER
POEMS
CREEP
CAN'T SEE BEHIND THESE BOOKS, BUT I'LL FOLLOW THE LIGHT!
LIBRARY
AGGHH! THE WINDOW WAS OPEN!

The next soccer strip that Ken was given to illustrate after 'Hugh Fowler' ended was 'The Soccernauts'. The year was 3,000¾ . Having been beaten by every team on Earth, Sid Starr and his squad set out to seek football fame wandering the universe aboard their football-shaped spaceship aptly named 'Miss-Kik'. On the planet Mountanius – which was inhabited by overgrown midgets – the Soccernauts played against a herd of goats on a pitch that was marked out on a steep mountainside; on planet Metalikas, the leather football hadn't yet been invented so the natives used a cast-iron ball and the honour of kicking-off remained with the visiting team; the Owlites, who were the inhabitants of planet Nocturnus, required very little sleep so their matches lasted for four days and nights, and so on. As can be seen from these examples, the general setting offered vast possibilities for the writer to come up with mind-boggling story ideas. Unfortunately, for some reason, the quality of Ken's artwork was below his usual standard. Perhaps he found creating new fantastic characters and landscapes every week somewhat bothersome and a strain on his imagination. But it is worthwhile pointing out that 'Faceache' – Ken's other strip that he'd been drawing concurrently for JET (and subsequently BUSTER) since March 1971 – was showing no signs of such decay.

Ken started illustrating 'The Soccernauts' at the end of March 1972 and finished on 18th June, 1972. Apparently, the strip wasn't doing well in the popularity charts and so only had a short run of fourteen weeks, starting in the SCORCHER AND SCORE issue cover-dated 13th May, and ended in the issue of 12th August, 1972 in which the Soccernauts suddenly realised it was time they went back to Earth and played marbles in retirement. Two episodes in the issues dated 22nd July and 12th August (the final published strip) were by another artist. The reason was that Ken had to undergo another operation in June 1972 and therefore spent nearly two months away from his drawing board.

While Ken was in hospital, 'The Soccernauts' feature was succeeded by 'Harry Hammertoe – The Soccer Spook'. Slowdown Rovers FC is a failed team, a mere shadow of the once-mighty squad when Harry Hammertoe was captain in Victorian times. The dream of the current boss is that Harry was alive and playing for the Rovers now. It turns out that the legendary player haunts the manager's office and is eager to oblige. Unfortunately for the boss and the Rovers, Harry has lost his soccer talents and turned into a jinx whose well-laid plans to help the team, which usually involved conjuring up ghosts of his old mates, always backfire.

With Ken not available to illustrate the new feature, it was given to Reg Parlett who provided the first five episodes, while three more early sets were by yet another artist. It is interesting to note that upon taking the strip over from Reg Parlett, Ken tweaked his own style slightly. There is, as a result, something 'Parlettian' about Ken's early pages of 'Harry Hammertoe', and the original strip logo by Reg Parlett survived the entire run of the feature. Ken started working on 'Harry Hammertoe' immediately after his recovery. He posted his first episode off on 19th August, 1972 and carried on drawing the strip regularly until 26th

June, 1973. The run of 'Harry Hammertoe' consists of fifty-two episodes in the SCORCHER AND SCORE weeklies (19th August, 1972 – 18th August, 1973), of which Ken illustrated forty-four, along with a double-page set in SCORCHER ANNUAL 1974. The start of 'Harry Hammertoe' coincided with another increase in pay to £21.00 per page (and per episode in the case of Annual work) for artwork only. All 'Harry Hammertoe' scripts were provided by Fleetway, and according to Ken's notes, at least one of these was by Sid Bicknell.

Ken enjoyed drawing 'Harry Hammertoe' and occasionally got carried away, forgetting that Fleetway didn't like things too creepy: his early episode about a spooks' union was returned for alteration, marked as being 'too spooky'. Apparently, the editorial team had different standards for the tolerable level of creepiness in various Fleetway titles, because by that time Ken's 'Faceache' in BUSTER was already past the innocent face-pulling stage and had evolved into a character capable of transforming himself into monstrous shapes and forms. Ken made some alterations, and the 'Spooks' Union' episode was eventually printed in SCORCHER AND SCORE cover-dated 25th November, 1972; from that point on Ken avoided further 'excesses' in his football strips. Not that he had to try hard, because he was soon given a platform to satisfy his craving for drawing otherworldly creepies and weirdies: a few months into the 'Harry Hammertoe' period (i.e. in the end of 1972) Bob Paynter invited Ken to illustrate 'Creepy Creations' for SHIVER AND SHAKE – a brand new IPC comic with horror comedy as the dominant theme.

'Harry Hammertoe' was put to rest exactly one year after it started and was followed by 'Jimmy Jinks'. The caption accompanying the first episode introduced him as the 'Jolly Jonah of the Football Fans' – a direct reference to Ken's legendary 'A-A-A-AGH-IT'S-'IM' Jonah from THE BEANO. An avid supporter of Slopville Wanderers, Jimmy Jinks drives the manager and the coach potty because his presence in or near the stadium is a certain recipe for disaster. The manager and the coach are tireless in plotting how to get rid of this jinx supporter, but their schemes always backfire and cause even more trouble. The run of 'Jimmy Jinks' consists of fifty episodes in the SCORCHER AND SCORE weeklies cover-dated 25th August, 1973 to 17th August, 1974, with forty-four illustrated by Ken Reid and six by another artist. Ken started working on the feature at the end of June 1973, and finished a year later by posting off the last page on 29th June, 1974. The first episode (in which Jimmy gets an idea to boost Wanderers' morale with a giant steam-driven rattle, but the boiler blows up and destroys the stadium) is notable because it is the only one drawn and written by Ken. The period of drawing 'Jimmy Jinks' saw the next increase in Ken's pay rate: IPC now valued his soccer artwork at £23.50 per page.

Sadly, Ken was in for another period of ill health and was unable to work for two weeks in the second half of September, followed by another two weeks of illness and X-rays at Salford Royal in the second

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Scorcher
EVERY MONDAY
10th January, 1970
THERE'S A GREAT SOCCER WALL CHART
Free INSIDE
The SOCCER-NAUTS
HAVING BEEN BEATEN BY EVERY TEAM ON EARTH, SID STARR AND HIS BOYS SOUGHT FOOTBALL FAME IN OUTER SPACE!
DURING THEIR TOUR OF SPACE, SID AND HIS SIDE HIT THE PLANET "METALIKAS"...
IT LOOKS AS THOUGH IT'S MADE OF ROUGH CAST-IRON, WITH SIX BALL BEARING SATELLITES WHIZZIN' ROUND IT!
IN THAT CASE, ONE OF YOUR LOT CAN HAVE THE HONOUR OF KICKING-OFF!
GULP! ER - SORRY, BUT UNTIL LEATHER SOCCER BOOTS AND LEATHER BALLS HAVE BEEN INVENTED, THE HONOUR REMAINS WITH THE VISITING TEAM!
AT HALF TIME (And still no kick-off), THE SOCCER-NAUTS DISCUSSED THE HOPELESS SITUATION IN THE DRESSING-ROOM...
IT'S RIDICULOUS! THEY'VE HAD NOTHING BUT NIL, NIL DRAWS ON THIS PLANET FOR THE PAST FIFTY YEARS!
HUH! NO WONDER, WHEN NO-ONE'LL VOLUNTEER TO KICK-OFF!
WELL, SOMEBODY THINK OF SUMP'N!

JIMMY JINKS
THE SLOPVILLE WANDERERS' MANAGER WAS WORRIED...
THE PRESIDENT OF BOLONIA IS COMING TO WATCH US PLAY THIS AFTERNOON! BUT IF JIMMY JINKS THE JINX GETS IN, HE'S BOUND TO MAKE THINGS GO WRONG!
RELAX, BOSS! I'VE GOT EXTRA GUARDS ON THE GATE TO STOP JINKS!
MEANWHILE, OUTSIDE THE GATES...
HI, FANS! GUESS WHO? 'S RIGHT! JIMMY JINKS, AN' I'M GONNA SNEAK IN, DISGUISED AS A BOLONIAN SPECTATOR!
AND SO...
A-HEM! MAKE WAY FOR ONE OF HIS PRESIDENT'S LOYAL SUBJECTS!
COR! AIN'T THEY LITTLE?
GUARD
I'LL SAY!
TRIPTOE TRIERS
PODGE
SKINNY
BLOT
CLOGGER
EARS
THICK
SNIFFER
HORATIO
BRAIN
SWIFTY
SLEEPER

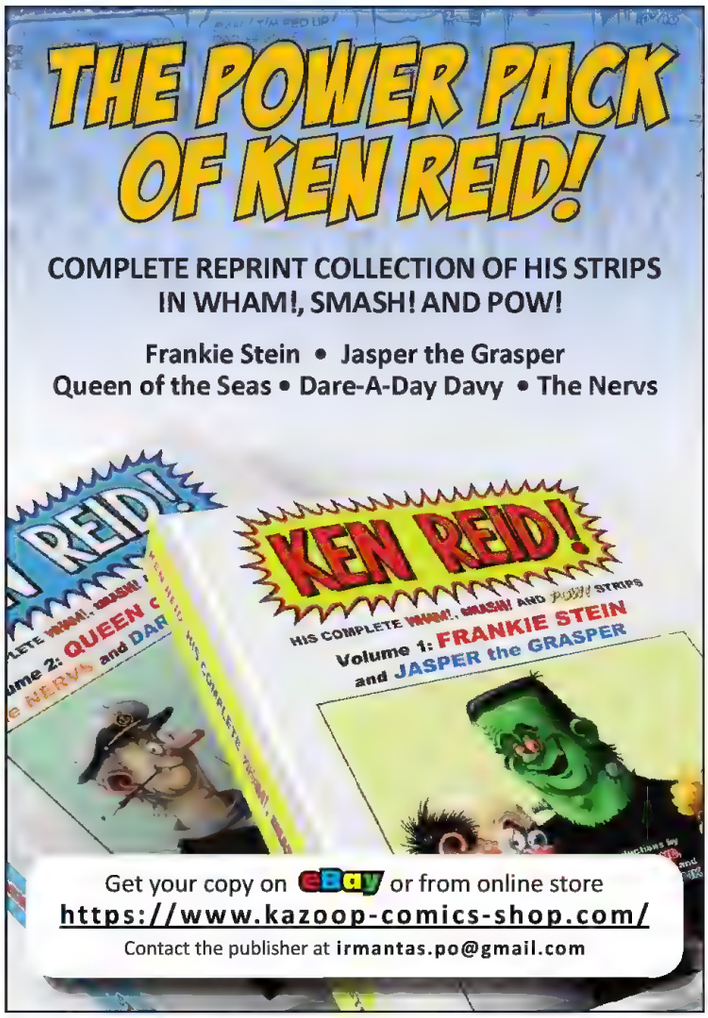
half of October. This explains gaps in the 'Jimmy Jinks' run and the episodes by a ghost artist.

Failing health wasn't the only trouble that Ken was going through at that time. His difficult marriage was coming to an end: on the 25th March, 1974, he received a summons from his wife, and on the 7th May, a notice of impending divorce proceedings. His domestic situation and worries over the divorce resulted in another week of lost work when, on the 10th June, Ken's wife took her belongings and left home for good. The divorce petition arrived on 1st August, 1974.

The last soccer strip that Ken Reid illustrated for the Scorcher and Score comic was another reader participation feature called 'Triptoe Triers'. In the first episode the Triers' boss introduced his hopeless roster: Podge the ever-hungry overweight goalie; the back four – Skinny, Blot, Clogger and Ears, who were as daft as brushes; the idiotic midfield pair Thick and Sniffer; and the four front runners – the one-eyed Horatio Nellison, Brain the twit, Swifty – who could only run in circles – and Sleeper, who dozed off if the game got dull. It's no surprise that the team had never scored any victories. Desperate for nifty ideas, the manager offered a generous weekly cash prize of £5 to any reader who came up with a novel way for the Triers to win a match. Some of the 'bright' ideas included putting itching powder in the opposition's boots, feeding the gluttonous goalie until he filled the entire goal, tying the ball to Swifty's boot with elastic, and so on. Ken posted the first episode off on 4th July, 1974, and continued drawing the feature for a month and a half until it was suspended because SCORCHER AND SCORE was to be absorbed by TIGER. For a while IPC contemplated the idea of transferring 'Triptoe Triers' to the new comic but decided against it at the end of October, 1974. The strip ran for only seven weeks in the SCORCHER AND SCORE issues cover-dated 24th August, 1974 to 5th October, 1974. Looking at the dates when Ken drew the strips and when they were printed in the weeklies, one can see that the periods don't overlap, making it obvious that all the stories were drawn from the scriptwriter's rather than readers' ideas, so the whopping cash prize was never paid out to readers, while the names of the alleged lucky winners were a little scam on the part of the editor.

This marked the end of the soccer period in Ken's career, which lasted for nearly five years from 1969 till 1974. He worked on eight different strips, and in each one there is something of Ken Reid at his best to admire. Ken's soccer output amounts to 219 pages for SCORCHER (later SCORCHER AND SCORE) weeklies and 17 for Annuals and Holiday Specials. In his comment on the Comics UK Forum, Ray Moore rightly concluded that '...all of the above, although admittedly some more than others and despite the seeming limitations of the football theme, gave Ken plenty of scope to employ those classic Reidian elements, the fizzog scrunging and general artistic 'weirdness', for which he is justly acclaimed, and as such don't deserve to be dismissed quite as summarily as Alan Clark would have had us do in the chapter on Ken Reid in his otherwise excellent book 'The Best of British Comic Art'.

With early 'Faceache', 'Creepy Creations', and his Power Comics art now having seen print, perhaps it's time that his long-forgotten football strips from SCORCHER were given the chance to be seen by comic fans.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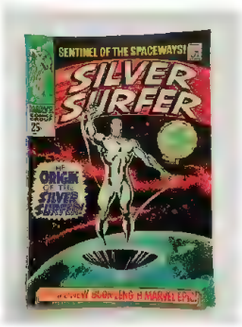

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ANDY DIGGLE INTERVIEW

By Steve J. Ray

Photos: Alex Knight

Andy Diggle is a fan-favourite and critically acclaimed writer and comics editor, originally from South London. He's written everything from Sonic The Hedgehog to Swamp Thing, The Losers (Vertigo), Marvel's Daredevil and DC Comics' Batman I met up with Andy at the May 2019 MCM Comic-Con at London's Excel, where we sat down and talked about comics.

It's a tough job, but somebody's got to do it.

Steve J. Ray: Andy, Hi. Welcome back to London; home and where it all started. How're things going?

Andy Diggle: Things are good. It's lovely to be back in London and amongst my fellow nerds.

S: Oh, yes! Our tribe, as I call us. Going back to the early days, from being writer/editor on Sonic The Hedgehog (Sonic The Comic) to becoming one of the many representations of Tharg The Mighty of 2000AD fame. What was that like?

A: Terrifying! Absolutely terrifying, as I had no idea what I was doing. No, it was amazing. I always knew that I wanted to write comics, and I always assumed that I would be pitching stories to 2000AD as a writer. I'd actually started preparing some pitches to send in.

I'd studied comics at university, in fact I actually taught the subject - I went back to teach comics for a while there. I was taking evening classes as a writer.

The traditional route at that point was you start with a "Future Shock" and then you might get a series in 2000AD, then you might eventually get to work with Vertigo, or something like that. I was always very keen on writing for Vertigo too, as well as for 2000AD. That seemed to be where my tastes would lie.

It was purely coincidence that there was simply an editorial assistant job going at 2000AD, so I applied for it. I was interviewed by David Bishop and Steve MacManus. I think it was because I'd done my dissertation on comics; on comics form, and how they worked from the inside... like storytelling techniques and stuff. I think that's probably what swung it. It wasn't just being a fan, it was actually that I'd taken an interest in the nuts and bolts of how they work.

When I started off I was just the office assistant, it was photocopying, answering mail, and that kind of thing... it was learning on the job, really. Which, in my case, meant floundering around and asking lots of questions like "How does this work, and how does that work?" So it was a bit scary, but super exciting as well! I was working with my childhood heroes; people like John Wagner and Carlos Ezquerra, and it was amazing.

Obviously, it was a huge learning experience for me. I made plenty of mistakes, and did lots of things that I wish I could go back and do differently, but at the same time I learned a hell of a lot and made loads of friends... and we're still friends today. I got on well with almost everybody who worked on the comic, and we still hang out whenever we see each other at shows and stuff. It was the best possible training you could ever get.

Like I said though, all I ever wanted was to be a writer and I never wanted to be one of those guys who is kind of "back seat driving." I became editor just at the point where Rebellion had bought 2000AD, and there was a certain amount of turmoil behind the scenes... just in terms of relocating, and so on. We didn't have the back-up we were used to, purely because the staff was much smaller. That was quite a stressful time.

It got the point where, after I'd been an editor for quite a while, that Matt Smith, who I'd brought on as my assistant - he's just got such a real feel for 2000AD - he's great and he's such a hard worker, that I felt that the comic would be in really safe hands with him. I wanted to do what I'd always said I wanted to do, and go and write comics. So I decided to leap out into the freelance world, and it's worked out pretty well, I think.

S: Was there a bit of pressure there? Obviously so many comics luminaries have come from 2000AD: John Wagner, Alan Grant, Carlos Ezquerra, those other chaps, Grant Morrison and Alan Moore - what ever happened to them? Did you feel a burden of pressure following on from them, as a writer?

A: Of course! One of the first things I was offered, when I did pitch stuff to Vertigo, was "Do you want to reboot Swamp Thing?" Alan Moore's run on Swamp Thing, with Steve Bissette and John Totleben, was one of the first American comics I ever read. That's what got me reading American comics.

S: For me that's still the bar.

A: Yeah, you know? That's one of the ones that taught me what comics can be. Even taking something that, before he came on, wasn't that well regarded after the first series was cancelled. It was just a pulp horror comic. Obviously he just thought to himself, "What can I do with this? How can I make this about something?" That was really inspiring. Plus, it was beautiful, and scary, and smart, and heartfelt.

I find that, with almost everything I've done, that I'm standing on the shoulders of giants. Following Brian Bendis and Ed Brubaker on Daredevil, you know? That was terrifying. (we both laugh) I still feel that I was completely out of my depth on that one. Those are tough acts to follow, you know? Following Grant Morrison on Action Comics! It's humbling. I know going in that I'm not going to be as good as those guys, I just have to do the best I can.

A lot of the time, when you're working on big titles with the big publishers, there will

quite often be a lot of following set editorial edicts. With Daredevil, Marvel said to me, "O.K. ... there's going to be this big crossover called "Shadowlands" where Matt Murdock is going to take control of The Hand, and they're going to build a giant castle in the middle of Manhattan", and I'm like, "O.K. ... but you know the Avengers live just down the road from here, right?" (we both laugh out loud) "Oh, don't worry about them!"

S: They're off-world.

A: That's the thing! So I kept asking, "But what are the Avengers and the Fantastic Four doing? Why aren't they helping Manhattan?" "No... don't worry about it!" "Oh... O.K." So I never really felt like I had a good handle on how to make that work as a crossover. That's on me, though. I can't really blame anyone else for that. For me, it didn't really work out.

There were other times, when they let me do my own thing, like Green Arrow: Year One, that was never pitched as "Year One" that was just a Green Arrow origin story. I like action movie style stories, that's kind of my thing. I've always felt more comfortable with the slightly more realistic and grounded approach, than with "everybody's got super-powers." I've never really enjoyed trying to make sense of all the internal logic of that. A threat feels more threatening when characters don't have super powers.

It was great. Dan DiDio just let us run with it. Me and Jock. We were talking about it at that year's New York Comic-Con, where we just presented a united front and we said "Jock's gonna draw this. Cool?" and he said "Cool, great", and we just did our thing.

S: In your defence, I loved a lot of the stuff when you took over a previous run, or from an established writer. Swamp Thing in particular. Yes, Alan Moore tore the character apart and built him back up, but he did it with a lot of love and respect for what went before, the original Len Wein/Bernie Wrightson classic run, especially. Then we had Rick Veith cut short, Doug Wheeler, Nancy A. Collins, Mark Millar... they went more their own way. Sometimes ignoring what went before and blowing up the character and premise. It was all very entertaining, but I also think some of it went a little too far.

You restored the atmosphere and feel of both Len Wein and Alan Moore, I think. For me you brought some of the old magic back. There was more focus on character, and less on spectacle... if that makes any sense? How did you feel when you were offered that small run on Swamp Thing? Was that your aim? Give it your own stamp, but bring back what made it great to start with?

A: Bringing it back to the classic was basically the goal I set myself for it. It's probably important to point out that when I took it on it hadn't been commissioned as an ongoing series, it was set up as a mini-series. The previous run had been Mark Millar. At the end of it Swamp Thing wasn't just a plant elemental, but fire, air, water... he had literally become the planet Earth. He had all of these different elemental powers. That was a really interesting place to end a series, but it was a difficult place to begin a new one.

So, what I took it upon myself to do with that was to basically hit the reset button. My story was about taking him back to just being the Alec Holland/Swamp Monster kind of guy. Yes, he was still the green elemental, but it was about de-powering him. It was about getting him to a point where, once my run finished, then DC could launch a new ongoing series, with a new issue #1, where you don't have to know any of that long, complicated continuity.

Complex continuity is a storyteller's worst nightmare. The fans love it, that's important, and it's what they invest in, but at the same time all that makes it difficult for new readers to get their head around. It makes it difficult for me to get my head around... you get to a point where there's simply too much going on in that storyline.

So, yeah. I set it up to get him back to being that plant monster guy by the end of it... or that was the plan. Then, because people liked it and it was well received, Karen Berger asked me to keep it going, as an ongoing series. I felt like I'd told the story that I'd set out to tell, so - very nicely and very politely - I had to tell her that If I'd known that it was going to an ongoing that I wouldn't have started there, I would've started where the rest button had already been pushed, and told the story completely differently.

So, it then went through various other writers, but it never quite took off. That wasn't anyone's fault, definitely not the other writers, it was just the wrong place or setting to launch an ongoing. Anyone else would've done an amazing job if they'd just been allowed to start fresh, with a new issue #1... which is what I thought they should've done.

S: Absolutely. So, going back. You also brought up Green Arrow: Year One, which I have to touch on for a few reasons. There have always been writers and artists who have left their mark, and whose names will live on, purely due to the stories they've told. You've done that for sure, but your name will be tied to characters, for a stranger, weirder and even more meta way. Your run on Green Arrow didn't just get fans on board because it was a great story, but it inspired the creators of the Arrow T.V. show, who even took your name and created the character of John Diggle, and his evil brother Andrew.

Great compliment? Mind-blowing? Surreal? All of the above? How did you feel about all that?

A: (With a huge, but slightly bewildered smile on his face) Very strange, very surreal. What they didn't know is that I actually do, in real life, have a brother called John.

S: No way!

A: (Laughing) and he's not a comic geek, he doesn't read comics, he doesn't watch Arrow.

S: So there's a real Andrew and there's a real John Diggle? That's even more crazy!

A: (We're both laughing) So that's just very cool. Those guys are here! (David Bradley and Stephen Amell were also in attendance at the London MCM Comic-Con where this interview took place). I'm hoping I might get to meet them at some point.

S: You can go up to David and say, "Hey... I'm your dad. Sort of."

A: (More laughter). Obviously, it's very flattering, and kind of surreal. It's just nice seeing just how much they used from our story. Watching the first episode of Arrow, Jock was sending me screen grabs from it.

S: He did some work for the show, didn't he?

A: I don't know if it was officially, as a concept guy, but I think they definitely used his look for Ollie, as inspiration for the island sequences and stuff. They used China White as the villain too... who we'd invented for our story. I was hoping that she'd become more of a major player.

S: So was I! I wish they'd kept to just using Green Arrow characters and villains, but alas...

A: It's all cool. It's so nice to see that stuff come to life. Nowadays there's just so much stuff tied to comics, though. It's hard because it's kind of like when your hobby becomes your job, you almost have to find a new hobby. It means that I read a lot less comics for fun now, and watch a lot less comics based shows for fun... because it all starts to feel like homework, So I've had to find other ways to indulge my escapist side. In my case, these days that tends to be Dungeons & Dragons, that's my nerd-out escapism. I love it. I play it twice a week now. It keeps me sane.

S: Me too... I try to get a day of gaming in a couple of times a month. It's brilliant.

A: It really is.

S: You're one of those writers who has handled so many big characters; Batman Confidential, Green Arrow, Superman, Action Comics... but, I love the lesser known characters, and your own creations. The Losers, Adam Strange. I guess it's much more liberating writing about those kind of characters, and running with them.

Without so much of a microscope on you, and all the constraints of continuity and everything else.

A: Yes, absolutely. That's a really good question. I think it probably shows, too. You can tell when I'm having fun. When you get the less well known characters, like - with no disrespect, because I love these characters - but the C-listers... like Adam Strange, who don't have the huge following of a Batman or a Superman, then you've got a lot more wiggle room, to kind of reinvent them. I really like the idea of reinvention. You can just update and add your own personality and stamp on them.

You wouldn't have an MCU that works as well as it does if not for what Mark Millar and Bryan Hitch did with The Ultimates.

S: Hear, hear!

A: They were just allowed to approach it in a totally new way. They were like, what if we were just able to make this all feel a bit more fresh, a bit more modern, and a bit more user friendly? They made the characters a lot more accessible to readers who may not have had decades worth of continuity knowledge.

That's exactly how we approached Adam Strange. It was terrific. Dan DiDio offered it to me and I just jumped at it. It's a space opera, you know, I can have fun with this. They just let me come up with something that was fresh. I was told that this story was going to be the lead into the Rann/Thanagar war! I kept asking him, "Wow, great! So do want me to start that war in this book? Or, is it gonna happen in another title? In which case, let me know how the war begins." You know.

I didn't find out 'til I'd written, like issue #7! So, for issue #8 I was already "I really need to know if you'd like me to start this war now!" Then the powers that be at DC finally said, "Right... so this is what's going to happen: the planet's gonna get teleported into Thanagar's star-system and blah, blah, blah", so if it feels like the story's taken a sudden left turn right at the end, that's because it did! Up until that point everything had been planned, then at the end I was told, "Well, here's how the story's going to end."

It was a lot of fun. There was a whole list of characters we were told to include like the Omega Men. Dan said to please include the Darkstars and then kill them all. They were literally just put into the story just so we could kill them off, for somebody else to reboot them at a later date.

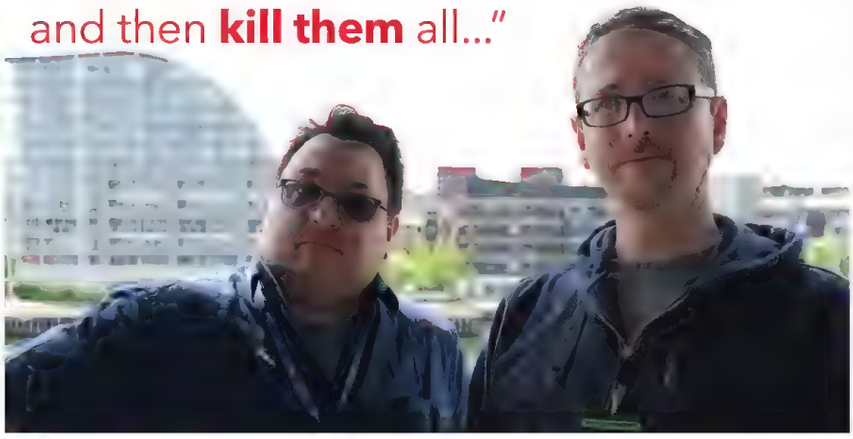
S: What? WOW!

A: (Laughing) Yeah, it was just a way of tying off old continuity. So, if you were wondering why they were only in it for just a couple of issues, then they all get nuked... well, that was the edict.

S: Damn!

A: The villain! That Star Killer guy, was a character that Dan had always liked, and I'd never heard of him, so I Googled him and was "This is so cheesy... how can I de-cheese this?" So I created a little bit of mystique around him as a villain. So it was just this great, fun, pulp, sci-fi action stuff that I really enjoyed writing.

"...include the **Darkstars** and then **kill them** all..."



I loved it so much that I wanted to do a sequel. I would've happily made that one an ongoing. The ending I would've used had Adam saving Rann by using the Zeta beam to zap the planet off to an unknown location, but he doesn't know where! Just to stop the bad guys from finding it.

So, the impetus for the new ongoing series would be the search for Rann. Adam Strange basically roaming the universe trying to find Rann. He knows his family are out there, somewhere... A lone man, on a quest. Like a Swiss Family Robinson in space.

S: I would read the (R@P out of that!

A: (Laughing) Thanks. Maybe one day.

S: That's actually pre-empted another one of my questions. When I heard that you'd be taking over Action Comics from Grant Morrison, I thought, "Yes!" then sadly it didn't pan out fully. Or, at least not the way that you or I would've probably liked. Are there any other projects that you would really love to revisit, if you got the chance?

A: I would've loved to have finished the Action Comics outline that was actually approved, absolutely. I had a year long outline green-lit...

S: That's gotta hurt.

A: There were so many constant changes behind the scenes, that it got to the point where what was going to get printed wasn't my story anymore, so I thought it best that they got somebody else to do it. I guess that's the diplomatic way of putting it.

S: Understood.

A: It really is a shame, because it's flattering to be asked to write such a huge book. It was quite stressful having to walk away. I kind of had to, though. For my stress levels, it was self-preservation. It was the right thing to do.

People always ask comics writers, "So which characters would you like to write?" No-one ever asks that of Stephen King, or James Elroy. They want to create their own characters, and tell their own stories. That's true of all writers.

With that said... I do have a couple more Batman stories in me, that I'd still like to write. ***To be Continued Next Issue...***

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GREAT WAR DUNDEE PROJECT

- Hidden Histories

The Great War Dundee (GWD) Hidden Histories project will concluded in September with the launch of a fascinating new booklet. The Hidden Histories project was made possible thanks to the generous support of The National Lottery Heritage Fund. The booklet was launched at an event involving GWD, which is being organised by the University of Dundee's Scottish Centre for Comics Studies.

Volunteers, known as GWD Ambassadors, have been working with the GWD Partnership to uncover 'hidden histories' about real Dundonians who experienced first-hand the changes and challenges that came with the First World War. The results of their research have been detailed in the new booklet. It covers a wide range of topics, from the appearance of female tram conductors during the war, to Dundonians' involvement with the war at sea.

The booklet is free, and can be collected from libraries and community centres around Dundee.

The information in the booklet will also be available online in GWD's website. Work is continuing to develop the information available on GWD's website. New elements to be released in the next few months include the addition of the details of Dundee seamen to the online Roll of Honour, and an opportunity to take an interactive tour around sites in Dundee city centre that link to the Great War.

The event, titled Great War Dundee – The War in Comics and Popular Culture took place on Friday 20th September 2019 at V&A Dundee. Inspired by the First World War, the event pulled together many of the threads of the GWD projects that have taken place since 2014. The event will cover topics such as the presentation of WW1 in comics and games, and attendees will get an opportunity to develop their own comic strips.

An exciting new comic was also be launched at the event. It tells the story of the effect of the Great War on Dundee, and its aftermath, and draws on many of the resources and knowledge that the GWD Partnership has introduced into the public domain over the last few years.

The comic will contain a story written by legendary comics creator Pat Mills, who worked at DC Thomson before creating the hugely successful British science fiction comic 2000AD (1977-present). In the 1970s Pat Mills started work on one of the most acclaimed war comics of all time, Charley's War. This told the story of Charley, an ordinary soldier in the trenches during the First World War. This is a poignant and realistic tale that remains very highly regarded. For the GWD comic Pat has written a story about a Black Watch soldier returning to Dundee in the aftermath of the First World War, and his attempts to adjust to civilian life. The artist is Gary Welsh, one of the University of Dundee's recent graduates. The story is inked, lettered and produced by Phillip Vaughan and is edited by Chris Murray.

The other strips included in the comic are 'The Women's Toon', written by Erin Keepers and Hailey Austin, with art by 2000AD artist Anna Morozova, and 'Casualties of War', written by Calum Laird and drawn by Elliot Balson. All these creators are graduates of the comics programme in Dundee. Ian Kennedy provides the cover artwork. The comic is free in this issue of ComicScene.

JON
MITCHELL
2019

Comic Scene Vol2 Issue final final 9 16-9-19.qxp_Layout 1 06/03/2020 10:44 Page 25

SPECIAL FREE COMIC SCENE EDITION!

GREAT WAR DUNDEE

UNIVERSE

FREE!

FEATURING

RAGTIME SOLDIER

BY PAT MILLS, GARY WELSH AND PHILLIP VAUGHAN

A SUCCESSOR TO CHARLEY'S WAR AT LAST!

ALSO FEATURING

THE WOMEN'S TOON!

BY HAILEY AUSTIN, ERIN KEEPERS AND ANNA MOROZOVA

AND

CASUALTIES OF WAR

BY CALUM LAIRD & ELLIOT BALSON

Kennedy

DISPATCHES

GREAT WAR DUNDEE

This comic is part of the Great War Dundee (GWD) Hidden Histories project, which was made possible thanks to the generous support of The National Lottery Heritage Fund. It tells the story of the effect of the Great War on Dundee, and its aftermath, and draws on many of the resources and knowledge that the GWD Partnership has introduced into the public domain over the last few years.

The comic contains a story written by legendary comics creator Pat Mills, who worked at DC Thomson before creating the hugely successful British science fiction comic *2000AD* (1977-present). In the 1970s Pat Mills started work on one of the most acclaimed war comics of all time, *Charley's War*. This told the story of Charley, an ordinary soldier in the trenches during the First World War. This is a poignant and realistic tale that remains very highly regarded. For the GWD comic Pat has written *'Ragtime Soldier'*, a story about a Black Watch soldier returning to Dundee in the aftermath of the First World War, and his attempts to adjust to civilian life. The artist is Gary Welsh, one of the University of Dundee's recent graduates.

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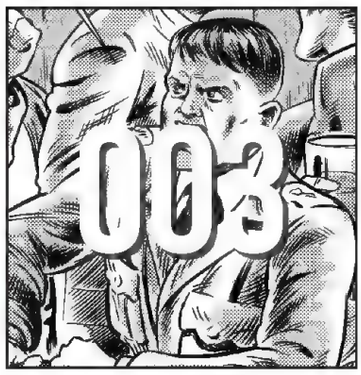

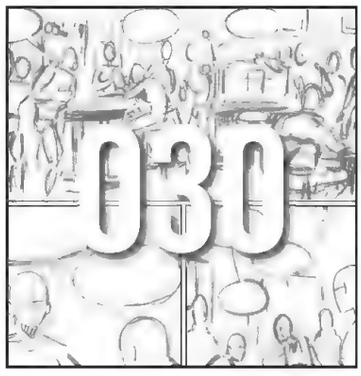

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Thanks to:
Great War Dundee
Heritage Lottery Fund

GREAT WAR DUNDEE PRESENTS

RAGTIME SOLDIER

'DEDICATED TO EVERYONE WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN WWI, AND THOSE WHO SURVIVED...'

SPECIAL THANKS TO
BILLY KENEFICK
IAIN DONALD
DEREK PATRICK
FIONA SINCLAIR

PROLOGUE

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WE ARE **FRED KARNO'S ARMY, THE RAGTIME INFANTRY: WE CANNOT **FIGHT,** WE CANNOT **SHOOT,** WHAT **EARTHLY** USE ARE WE! AND WHEN WE GET TO BERLIN, **THE KAISER** HE WILL SAY, 'HOCH, HOCH! MEIN GOTT, WHAT A BLOODY ROTTEN LOT ARE **THE RAGTIME INFANTRY!'***

*BRITISH SOLDIERS' WORLD WAR ONE TRENCH SONG.

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DUNDEE, NOVEMBER 1922.
OUR RAGTIME SOLDIER WILL BE OUT SOON. GET READY.
I FOAM AT THE MOUTH LISTENING TO HIS TOMMY ROT ABOUT LOOS.
AYE. HE'S AGAINST EVERYTHING WE FRONTIERSMEN HOLD DEAR.
IF HE SPEAKS AGAIN TOMORROW, THEN MR CHURCHILL WILL LOSE THE ELECTION AND THIS SCOTTISH LENIN, SCRYMGEOUR, WILL WIN.
IT'S THOSE DAMN LETTERS. WE MUST PERSUADE HIM TO PART WITH THEM.
G'WAN, ROBBIE! NO ONE PLAYS RAGTIME LIKE YOU!
JUST ONE RAG, ROBBIE. EH? TO SHOW THERE'S NAE HARD FEELINGS?
WE WANT RAGTIME! WE WANT RAGTIME!
JUNK MAN RAG...? RAZZASSA MAZZASSA...? RAG TIME SKEDADDLE...? I ALWAYS LOVED THE WAY YOU PLAYED RAG BABE...
HOW ABOOT TEMPTATION RAG...? BECAUSE YOU WERE TEMPTED A 'RICHT, WEREN'T YE, MAGGIE?
SO WHILE I WAS FIGHTING IN THE TRENCHES, YE WENT ON YER AIN SKEDADDLE WITH MA BROTHER!
IT WASNAE LIKE THAT, ROBBIE. I SWEAR.
SO WHIT WAS IT LIKE, MAGGIE MA 'DEAR?

IT WASNAE EASY - WHAT WI IAN BEING A WAR RESISTER AN' ALL.
BUT WHILE YE WERE VISITING HIM IN PRISON, YE STARTED TO ADMIRE HIS... PRINCIPLES? AND FORGOT ABOUT YOUR AIN? WAS THAT IT?
MAYBE IT'S COS I WAS A RESISTER, YOU CANNAE ACCEPT SHE CHANGED HER MIND ABOUT YE. MAYBE YE THINK I BETRAYED MA COUNTRY?
OCH, AWA' WITH YE, MON! I AGREED WITH YER STAND! AND AFTER LOOS, SO DID THE LADS O' THE FOURTH. ASK CLYDE. HE'LL TELL YE.
WE KEN THE WAR WAS A LIE. AND CLYDE'S GI'EN ME THE PAPERS TO PROVE IT. THAT'S WHY I'M SPEAKING FOR SCRYMGEOUR.
BUT YOU BETRAYED ME, IAN!
YER BUM'S OOT THE WINDAE, YE BAMPOT. MAGGIE WROTE 'N TELT YE THE BA' WAS ON THE SLATES. IT WAS O'ER BETWEEN YE, MON.
SO THEN YE COULD MAKE YER MOVE AND MARRY HER...? EHM NAE EEJIT!
SHUT YER GEGGIES, OR I'LL LAMP THE PAIR O' YE!
THIS FEUD HAS GONE ON LONG ENOUGH!
MAGGIE'S REET. WE'RE BRITHERS, MON.
GET IT UP YE. YE DESERVE EACH OTHER.

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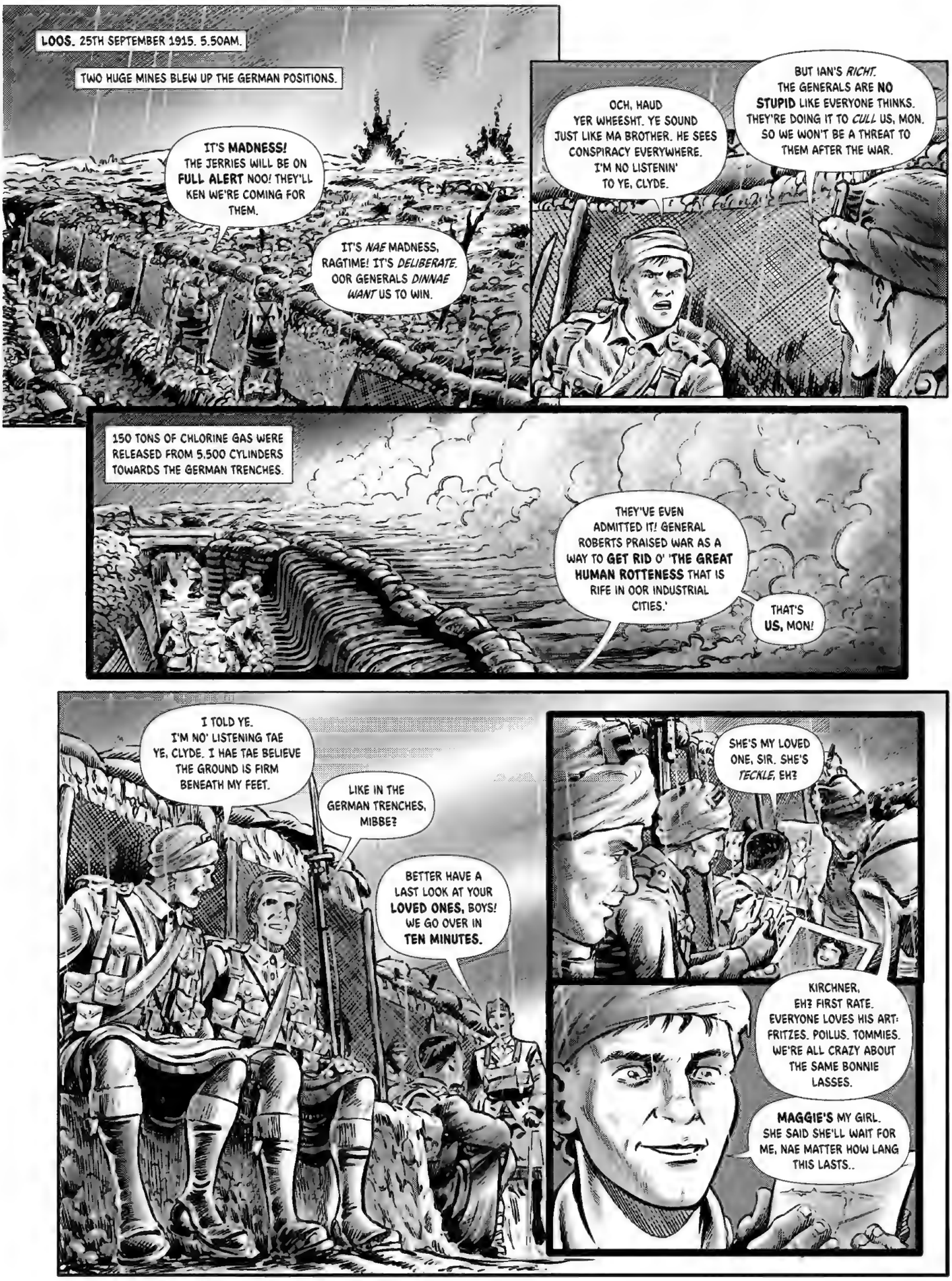
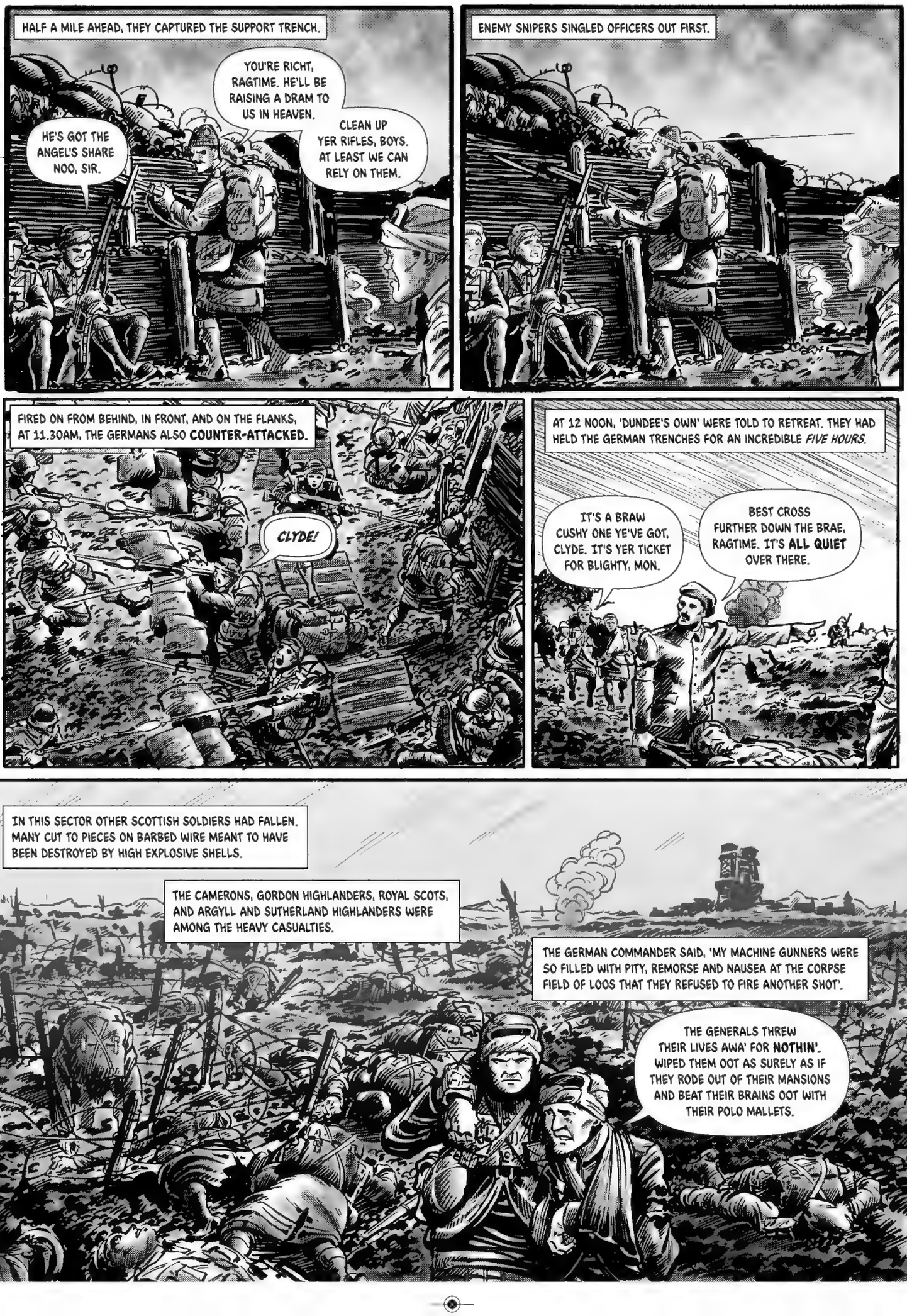
AW, NO! MAJOR POLLARD AND HIS LEGION OF FRONTIERSMEN AGAIN! YE KEN YE'VE CROSSED THE FRONTIER...? G'WAN! GET BACK TAE YER SIDE O' HADRIAN'S WALL!
WELL, WELL! WHAT WOULD OUR TEETOTAL SCRYMGEOUR THINK OF HIS RIGHT HAND MAN COMING OUT OF A SALOON?
WE WANT THOSE LETTERS, MCTAGGART.
THEY'RE FORGERIES FULL OF DANGEROUS LIES. IT'S YOUR PATRIOTIC DUTY TO HAND THEM OVER.
SO THAT CHURCHILL CAN WIN...? THE MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DARDANELLES? THE BLACK AND TANS? THE INVASION OF RUSSIA?
C'MON THEN, YE SCUNNERS!
AFTER HIM!
YOU DOG, YOU PIG, YOU DRUNKEN SOT! IT'S CURS LIKE YOU WHO TAINT THE ARMY WITH YOUR LIES!
WE SHOULD SCREW YOUR NECK AROUND ON THE GALLOWS FOR TALKING TREASON!
GOT TAE BIDE OOT O' SIGHT UNTIL THE RALLY. THEN I CAN TELL WHAT HAPPENED AT LOOS.
WHEN THE BLACK WATCH WENT OVER THE TOP ON DUNDEE'S DARKEST DAY!


LOOS. 25TH SEPTEMBER 1915. 5.50AM.
TWO HUGE MINES BLEW UP THE GERMAN POSITIONS.
IT'S MADNESS! THE JERRIES WILL BE ON FULL ALERT NOO! THEY'LL KEN WE'RE COMING FOR THEM.
IT'S NAE MADNESS, RAGTIME! IT'S DELIBERATE. OOR GENERALS DINNAE WANT US TO WIN.
OCH, HAUD YER WHEESHT. YE SOUND JUST LIKE MA BROTHER. HE SEES CONSPIRACY EVERYWHERE. I'M NO LISTENIN' TO YE, CLYDE.
BUT IAN'S RICHT. THE GENERALS ARE NO STUPID LIKE EVERYONE THINKS. THEY'RE DOING IT TO CULL US, MON. SO WE WON'T BE A THREAT TO THEM AFTER THE WAR.
150 TONS OF CHLORINE GAS WERE RELEASED FROM 5,500 CYLINDERS TOWARDS THE GERMAN TRENCHES.
THEY'VE EVEN ADMITTED IT! GENERAL ROBERTS PRAISED WAR AS A WAY TO GET RID O' 'THE GREAT HUMAN ROTTENESS THAT IS RIFE IN OOR INDUSTRIAL CITIES.'
THAT'S US, MON!
I TOLD YE. I'M NO' LISTENING TAE YE, CLYDE. I HAE TAE BELIEVE THE GROUND IS FIRM BENEATH MY FEET.
LIKE IN THE GERMAN TRENCHES, MIBBE?
BETTER HAVE A LAST LOOK AT YOUR LOVED ONES, BOYS! WE GO OVER IN TEN MINUTES.
SHE'S MY LOVED ONE, SIR. SHE'S TECKLE, EH?
KIRCHNER, EH? FIRST RATE. EVERYONE LOVES HIS ART: FRITZES. POILUS. TOMMIES. WE'RE ALL CRAZY ABOUT THE SAME BONNIE LASSES.
MAGGIE'S MY GIRL. SHE SAID SHE'LL WAIT FOR ME, NAE MATTER HOW LANG THIS LASTS..

MA'S HAIR 'N SKIN'S TURNED YELLA' FRAE WORKING WITH THE TNT. TAE HELL WI' THIS WAR!
IF YE'RE SO AGAIN' IT, WHY DID 'YE ENLIST?
BECAUSE I LOVE DUNDEE, MON. I CANNAE LET MA MATES AND MA CITY DOON.
WHAT ABOUT THE WEE BARRA? 'TIGER TIM'? HAS HE GOT ANYONE?
HE'S AN ORPHAN, SARGE. BUT HE'S GOT WINKLE AN' BINKLE AN' CHU, CHIN AN' HIS CHOW FOR COMPANY.
GAS! GAS! IT'S COMIN' BACK!
ARE YE SURE IT ISNAE YOU...? DID YE FART?
I'M NO JOKING, CLYDE! HOODS DOWN!
DESPITE THE GAS-COMPANY'S WARNING TO H.Q. : 'WEATHER DEAD CALM. IMPOSSIBLE DISCHARGE ACCESSORY,' HQ REPLIED: 'ACCESSORY TO BE DISCHARGED AT ALL COSTS'.
IT'S DONE FOR THE LADS IN THE 2ND BATTALION!
SO THERE WERE 2,200 BRITISH GAS CASUALTIES BEFORE THE ATTACK BEGAN.
6.00AM. THE 4TH BATTALION ADVANCED ACROSS NO MAN'S LAND WITH A UNIQUE DUNDEE BATTLE CRY.
MARMALADE!

AND THESE HOODS ARE USELESS! THAE' COULDNAE PROTECT YE FAE A FART!
CANNAE' SEE A THING!
STAY CLOSE TOGETHER! I'VE GOT A COMPASS!
THE GERMAN TRENCHES WERE UP TO 4,000 YARDS AWAY.
IT'S THINNING! MASKS OFF!
COME ON, MA' LADS! WE'RE NEARLY THERE!
OILY COTTON WASTE WAS STREWN ALONG THE GERMAN PARAPET AND SET ALIGHT AS A BARRIER TO THE GAS.
WE'LL SOON BE AT THEM!
THE KILTIES!
TIGER TIM!
FIRE UNTIL THE BARRELS BURST!
ON THE BA', DUNDEE!
SHOW EM WHAT WE ARE!
BY 7.00AM, THE FRONT LINE HAD BEEN TAKEN.
KAMERAD! KAMERAD!
YOU'RE NAE COMRADE O' MINE, FRITZ! GET DOON THERE OR I'LL STICK YE!

HALF A MILE AHEAD, THEY CAPTURED THE SUPPORT TRENCH.
THE JERRY BOMBARDMENT IS O'ER STRONG. OOR REINFORCEMENTS WILL NIVER GET THROUGH!
THAT'LL BE **OOR** FAULT- WE ADVANCED O'ER FAR AND O'ER FAST.
BOMBERS!
FORM A LINE! LET'S GIE 'EM OOR **SHOTS!**
THE BRITISH NO 15 BALL GRENADE REQUIRED LIGHTING THE FUSE WITH AN EXTERNAL IGNITER, STRIKING IT LIKE A MATCH.
ANOTHER DUD, SARGE! THEY DINNAE LIKE THE DAMP.
THEN THEY WOULDNAE LIKE MA TENEMENT IN LOCHEE ROAD! GEE'Z ANOTHER, RAGTIME!
MOST WERE USELESS. THEIR WEIGHT AND SIZE ALSO LIMITED THEIR RANGE.
GENERAL HAIG BLAMES WORKERS LIKE ME MAW. HE SAYS, 'THEY HAE TOO MANY HOLIDAYS AND TOO MUCH TO DRINK.'
HE WOULD KEN. HE SELLS THEM ENOUGH WHISKY!
ACH AWA' AN' SHUFFLE TO YE AH! I WINNA' HEAR A BAD WORD SAID ABOOT HIS WHISKY!
THE GERMAN STICK GRENADES WERE FAR SUPERIOR.
AAAAHH!


HALF A MILE AHEAD, THEY CAPTURED THE SUPPORT TRENCH.
HE'S GOT THE ANGEL'S SHARE NOO, SIR.
YOU'RE RICHT, RAGTIME. HE'LL BE RAISING A DRAM TO US IN HEAVEN.
CLEAN UP YER RIFLES, BOYS. AT LEAST WE CAN RELY ON THEM.
ENEMY SNIPERS SINGLED OFFICERS OUT FIRST.
FIRED ON FROM BEHIND, IN FRONT, AND ON THE FLANKS, AT 11.30AM, THE GERMANS ALSO COUNTER-ATTACKED.
CLYDE!
AT 12 NOON, 'DUNDEE'S OWN' WERE TOLD TO RETREAT. THEY HAD HELD THE GERMAN TRENCHES FOR AN INCREDIBLE FIVE HOURS.
IT'S A BRAW CUSHY ONE YE'VE GOT, CLYDE. IT'S YER TICKET FOR BLIGHTY, MON.
BEST CROSS FURTHER DOWN THE BRAE, RAGTIME. IT'S ALL QUIET OVER THERE.
IN THIS SECTOR OTHER SCOTTISH SOLDIERS HAD FALLEN. MANY CUT TO PIECES ON BARBED WIRE MEANT TO HAVE BEEN DESTROYED BY HIGH EXPLOSIVE SHELLS.
THE CAMERONS, GORDON HIGHLANDERS, ROYAL SCOTS, AND ARGYLL AND SUTHERLAND HIGHLANDERS WERE AMONG THE HEAVY CASUALTIES.
THE GERMAN COMMANDER SAID, 'MY MACHINE GUNNERS WERE SO FILLED WITH PITY, REMORSE AND NAUSEA AT THE CORPSE FIELD OF LOOS THAT THEY REFUSED TO FIRE ANOTHER SHOT'.
THE GENERALS THREW THEIR LIVES AWA' FOR NOTHIN'. WIPED THEM OOT AS SURELY AS IF THEY RODE OUT OF THEIR MANSIONS AND BEAT THEIR BRAINS OOT WITH THEIR POLO MALLETS.

WE'VE FINALLY RUN OUR FOX TO EARTH. THE LETTERS, IF YOU PLEASE, MCTAGGART.
AND IF I SAY NO TO YE, MAJOR?
OH, I DO HOPE YOU WILL.
SLING YOUR HOOK, POLLARD. OR WE'LL SLING OORS.
YE'RE NO WELCOME IN DUNDEE.
AND NEITHER IS YER MR CHURCHILL. NO' EFTER THE DARDANELLES.
AND OPPOSING VOTES FOR WOMEN. HE SAID WE WERE 'WELL REPRESENTED BY OOR FAITHERS, BROTHERS AND HUSBANDS.'
I'LL REMEMBER YOU... RAGTIME.
THANKS, MAGGIE. AND I NEVER SAID AFORE, IAN... I KEN HOW HARD IT WAS FOR YE IN PRISON.
OCH, I DIDNAE MIND BARLINNIE, MON. IT WAS BEING SENT A WHITE FEATHER THAT REALLY UPSET ME.
IT WAS A WHITE FEATHER FROM ROUND A CHICKEN'S BUM!
C'MON, AND I'LL TREAT YE ALL TO HA'PENNY MOP-UPS.
LAST OF THE BIG SPENDERS, EH? WILL I WRING FRESH CLOTHS OOT FOR YE SPECIALLY?
THAT'LL BE GRAND. AN' I'LL PLAY THE LATEST RAG FROM JELLY ROLL MORTON. IT'S HOT. OOR MAW WILL HATE IT!

THE ELECTION RALLY ON MAGDALEN GREEN.
...AND FINALLY, I'D LIKE TO READ LETTERS FRAE' A GENERAL IN THE BRITISH ARMY TO HIS GERMAN OPPOSITE NUMBER DURING THE WAR.
THEY WERE GIVEN TO ME BY, LET'S JUST SAY, A FRIEND ON THE CLYDE.
DRINKING IS NOT THINKING
"...WE APPRECIATE YOUR GENEROUS OFFER TO PROVIDE AS MANY RANGEFINDERS AND TELESCOPIC SIGHTS AS WE REQUIRE.
AS YOU RECOMMENDED, WE CHECKED THE EQUIPMENT OF CAPTURED OFFICERS AND IT'S FIRST RATE.
WE NEED 8,000 TO 10,000 EACH PER MONTH OF THE TWO TYPES OF BINOCULARS, ONE FOR INFANTRY OFFICERS AND ONE FOR ARTILLERY OFFICERS.
DELIVERY VIA SWITZERLAND. IN RETURN WE WILL SUPPLY YOU WITH THE FOLLOWING BALES OF RUBBER..."
SHAME!! SHAME!! SHAME!!
THEY TRADED ARMS AND SUPPLIES THROUGHOUT THE WAR. THEY DIDNAE WANT IT TO END QUICKLY.
LOOS HAD TO FAIL - SAME AS THE DARDANELLES. IF THE ALLIES WON, CONSTANTINOPLE WOULD BE GIVEN TO RUSSIA.
SO CHURCHILL MADE SURE IT FAILED WITH A LACK O' EQUIPMENT, SOLDIERS AND COMPETENT LEADERS.
LET'S MAKE SURE THIS NE'ER HAPPENS AGIN.
'DUNDEE'S OWN' BEGAN THE ATTACK WITH 21 OFFICERS AND 450 MEN. BY NEXT DAY, ONLY ONE OFFICER AND 210 MEN WERE FIT FOR DUTY. THE REST WERE WOUNDED OR DEAD.
ANTI-WAR EDWIN SCRYMGEOUR WON THE ELECTION AND BECAME MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DUNDEE IN PLACE OF CHURCHILL. TODAY, THERE IS ONLY ONE COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE TO CHURCHILL IN THE CITY.
'BIG ENGLAND'S SORROW IS NATIONAL; LITTLE SCOTLAND'S IS PERSONAL': IAN HAY, THE FIRST HUNDRED THOUSAND (EDINBURGH, 1915)
END OF PROLOGUE.

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SCOT FREE

A GUIDE TO THE STORY OF

RAGTIME SOLDIER

BY PAT MILLS

Illustration: Gary Welsh

British soldiers called themselves the Ragtime Infantry in World War One.

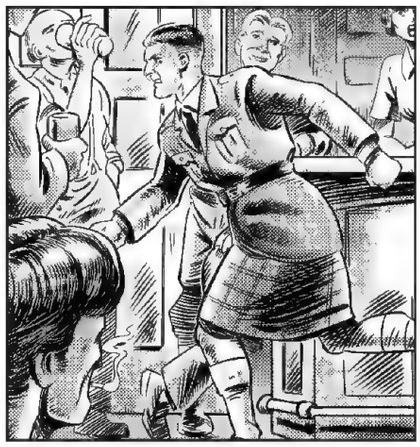
It means *'dangerous and a bit crazy'*. It comes from Ragtime music, which was the counter-culture music of World War One, something that seems to have been largely ignored by historians. Perhaps they're not aware of just how important 'rebellious music' is to teenagers and young people in their twenties – and that was just as true a century ago as it is today.

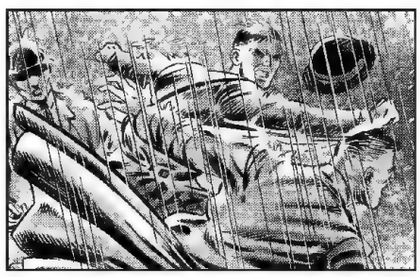
In a similar way, just as the music of The Doors, The Animals ('We Gotta Get Out Of This Place'), and Country Joe & The Fish ('I Feel Like I'm Fixin To Die Rag') are associated with the Vietnam War and were loved by American soldiers, so Ragtime – proto-Jazz – was loved by the British troops.

It was like they were calling themselves *'the Rock and Roll Infantry'*.

Ragtime reached British shores long before the Americans brought us Jazz in 1917. I suspect that ports like Dundee and Liverpool would have been the first to receive the Ragtime sheet music from New Orleans in 1912 and 1913. New sheet music was eagerly collected by teenagers, just like vinyl was for later generations and creating playlists is today.

Ragtime often sounds rather dreary today because of scratchy, fading recordings and later versions available on Youtube, but the earliest Ragtime was rather cool. It was seen as 'dirty' music, sexy music, black music, and it was hot! For its time, it was revolutionary! The older generation hated this 'wild' new sound and the exciting dances that went with it. Inevitably, it was 'cleaned-up' with a parents-approved version by the clean-cut, wholesome and white Irene and Vernon Castle. They successfully *'removed the stigma of vulgarity from close dancing'* (Wikipedia). Dancers were advised: *'Do not shake the hips. Do not hop.'*





Ken Burns describes Ragtime in episode one of his *Jazz* (2001) documentary TV series. He relates how one fierce critic of the craze that was sweeping America said, *'Ragtime is syncopation gone mad. And its victims in my opinion can only be treated successfully like a dog with rabies – with a dose of lead. Whether it's a passing phase of our decadent art culture or an infectious disease come to stay, like leprosy, time alone can tell. '*

In 1913, the *New York Times* commented, *'Can it be said that America is falling prey to the collective soul of the negro through the influence of what is popularly known as Ragtime music. If there is any tendency to such a national disaster, it should definitely be pointed out and extreme measures taken to inhibit the influence and avert the increasing danger if it has not already gone too far.'*

This then was the *'dangerous'* music that our forefathers were into when they went to war.

FRED KARNO'S ARMY

Fred Karno was the *'King of Slapstick Comedy'*, responsible for introducing Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel to the world. So when our soldiers called themselves *'Fred Karno's Army'*, they were really laughing at themselves. They're showing the same satirical sense of humour that we see in *Monty Python* and today with shows like *South Park*, *The Simpsons* and *The Office*.

There's a fascinating Scottish link to Fred Karno's Army. The Scottish comedian Billie Ritchie also worked for impresario Fred Karno, and Chaplin was actually inspired by Billie's drunk Scotsman walk to produce his own famous drunken tramp. There's one silent movie short of Billie – *'Almost A*

Scandal' – on Youtube which is very Chaplinesque. If you can imagine Billie talking with a Scottish accent – and having a Scottish attitude – it might still come over to a modern audience!

LEGION OF FRONTIERSMEN

This was a vigilante organisation dedicated to preserving the British Empire and had strong connections to the Establishment and the British secret service. One leading member, Captain Hugh Pollard, actually triggered the Spanish Civil War by bringing General Franco back from exile in The Canaries. Once Franco had overthrown the government and was in power, Pollard became head of British Intelligence in Spain.

Captain Pollard is a fascinating character – a classic villain I've researched carefully for another project. He is the equivalent of George MacDonald Fraser's Flashman or Captain Snell in Charley's War. He's the leader of the Frontiersmen in this story and he is likely to appear in future Ragtime Soldier stories.

MEDIA BLACKOUT

Many of the facts featured in Ragtime Soldier are not widely known today. This is because during the centenary years of World War One, there was a deliberate media blackout on any book, film or TV show that took a strong anti-war position. The reason is obvious, of course: if we question what happened in the past, we may also question what is happening in the world today.

At the end of 2014 I gave a lecture at the University of Liverpool showing numerous examples of this blackout. There's an audio recording of my lecture available at www.millsverse.com/charleyswarrevisionistspin/ along with a downloadable PDF transcript of my lecture. You can also view the powerpoint presentation, which shows many relevant images from Charley's War and key characters. I gave this lecture because I was so dismayed by how the truth about World War One was being deliberately suppressed by the Establishment.

Even the brilliant Blackadder Goes Forth was barely shown during the centenary years. Perhaps this is not so surprising, as it is loathed by politicians and revisionist historians who prefer us to believe their Establishment view of the war. Today's historians have successfully revised the long accepted anti-war view of World War One as a tragic nightmare caused by the Establishment and directed by idiot Generals. They have completely transformed the conflict into a *'just war'* directed by Generals who adapted to the new era and defeated an *'evil'* enemy.

Such historians are known as revisionist historians. They have been particularly successful in the last two decades, largely suppressing any alternative voices that challenge their Establishment view of the truth. Thus, the massacres and insane futility of the Battle of the Somme was presented on BBC TV as *'The Somme: From Defeat to Victory'.*
I visited the British Library bookshop, the very heart of the Establishment, in 2014 and found numerous books on the war, but there was not one about conscientious objectors or pacifists.

THE BRITISH RESISTANCE

Thanks to our media, words like *'conscientious objectors'* and *'pacifists'* often now have a negative association. As if there's something weird, or wrong with people who are anti-war. It's why I now use the term *'war resisters'* – a term I think is more powerful and appropriate.

Nowhere was the Resistance stronger than in Scotland and particularly in Dundee. Interestingly, many Scottish soldiers had great sympathy and understanding for the Resistance as the story Ragtime Soldier shows.

The heroes of the British Resistance have stories to tell that are easily as exciting as any story of the French Resistance during World War Two, but they will never be told elsewhere, thanks to the blackout. Comics are one of the few places to escape this censorship. There are a few similar voices out there, such as guerrilla campaigns by artists such as Darren Cullen (www.spellingmistakescostlives.com). His Action Man: Battlefield Casualties videos on Youtube are very watchable and brought down the wrath of the media upon him!

Amongst the many heroes of the British Resistance are Edwin Scrymgeour, E.D. Morel (both elected as MPs for Dundee, replacing Winston Churchill), John Maclean (Glasgow hero of Red Clydeside fame), John S. Clarke (the lion tamer who became a Glasgow MP), Sylvia Pankhurst and Alice Wheeldon (Framed by the British secret service, she was accused of trying to murder the Prime Minister with a poison dart!).

'MARMALADE'!

I drew on the Great War Dundee site for my research: www.greatwardundee.com It proved invaluable. And also contemporary accounts, including this remarkable poem written shortly after the battle. It was heart-breaking to discover that those young Black Watch soldiers from Dundee used 'Marmalade!' as their battle cry when they went over the top.

OOR GALLANT FOURTH

Lads o' valour, lads o' grit,
Lads wha's frames are strongly knit,
Lads wha strike hard whom they hit,
Are in the Fourth.
The 'Great Push' found them tae the fore,
Like their sires in days of yore.
'Marmalade!' Eh, what a roar!
Cam" frae the Fourth.
They cared not for the rifles' spit,
They were oot tae dae their bit,
They've proved that they are lads o' grit,
Oor gallant Fourth.
'On the ba', Dundee', they cried
They as steel in fire were tried,
Nobly lived and nobly died,
Lads o' the Fourth.
When o' wordly cares I'm free,
And I've crossed the 'sullen sea',
Weel tae the fore I ken I'll see
Lads o' the Fourth.
The People's Journal, 16 October 1915

I also talked to a friend from Glasgow who warned me that the Dundee accent was the thickest and hardest to understand in Scotland! I guess I should have known that from my happy years living in Dundee in the 1970s. So, to ensure I got it right, I consulted 'Dundonian for Beginners', the Dundee Evening Telegraph and final dialect input from Ian Kennedy! www.eveningtelegraph.co.uk/2016/02/29/13-phrases-dundonians-understand-that-confuse-the-rest-of-scotland/

Special thanks to Phil Vaughan and Chris Murray (University of Dundee) who also advised me on the Dundee accent, to Dr Derek J Patrick (University of St Andrews) and especially to Billy Kenefick (University of Dundee). Billy vividly related how war resister Edwin Scrymgeour (the 'Dundee Lenin' according to

the local papers), defeated the mighty Winston Churchill himself! It's a story made even more remarkable by the fact that Scrymgeour was elected as a prohibitionist, who believed in *'thinking not drinking'.*

Thanks to all your efforts, we finally have a successor to Charley's War. At last! It's only taken six years and a trail of previous failed attempts! That's how powerful the media blackout really is in Britain.

It's no coincidence that Ragtime Soldier was commissioned in Scotland. There is no way it could have happened elsewhere in the United Kingdom. I tried many times. Only in Scotland is such freedom of expression still possible.

THE DUNDEE ELECTION

The story of the 1922 Election, of Scrymgeour versus Churchill, is an explosive one. It's fortunate that comics can reveal this astonishing story and how, with grim memories of Loos, the Somme and Ypres, Dundee voted against Churchill.

I adapted the comments of J.B. Priestley ('An Inspector Calls') for *'Red'* Clyde to say in the story. It sums up the horror of Loos so much better than I ever could and tells us what must have been in the minds of Dundonians when they went to the polls:
'The British command specialised in throwing men away for nothing. The tradition of an officer class, defying both imagination and common sense, killed most of my friends as surely as if those cavalry generals had come out of the chateaux with polo mallets and beaten their brains out.'

Also in the election and also elected as MP, was Resistance leader E.D. Morel. He had previously exposed the atrocities of the Belgians in the Congo in *'Red Rubber'.* During the war he courageously exposed how – through secret diplomacy – Britain had manipulated the other nations into war. Reading his book *'Truth and the War'* (1916), I was struck by how similar it was to how Tony Blair manipulated Britain into the Iraq War in 2003.

Morel's book was the WikiLeaks of its day. And, like Julian Assange, he would pay for his revelations. He was thrown into prison on a trumped-up charge and they broke his health so that when he emerged, *'His hair is completely white (there was hardly a tinge of white before) when he first came out, he collapsed completely, physically and mentally, largely as the result of insufficient food. He says one only gets three quarters of an hour reading in the whole day – the rest of the time is spent on prison work, etc.'*

I had an interesting exchange of tweets some years back with leading revisionist historian Professor Gary Sheffield about Morel. I pointed out that Morel had shown Britain was responsible for the Great War. He courteously replied that Morel was mistaken in his views, although he didn't explain to me how.

For a Resistance leader like Morel to be elected, too, shows just how much Dundonians knew about what was really going on in the world. There were cheap anti-Establishment pamphlets (the blogs of their day) available to them and I believe they were actually better informed than we are today.

PROLONGING THE WAR

The case that the war was deliberately extended is made in *Prolonging the Agony: How The Anglo-American Establishment Deliberately Extended WWI by Three-and-a-Half Years,* by Scottish authors Jim Macgregor and Gerry Docherty (2018). See also their blog, which includes excerpts: www.ww1hiddenhistory.co.uk/

To my knowledge, no revisionist historian has ever answered their serious charges. Namely, that millions of young men died for no reason other than the Establishment's pursuit of power

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and for commercial gain. I draw on their material in Ragtime Soldier.

Jim Macgregor told me that their previous book *Hidden History: The Secret Origins of the First World War*(2013) was also ignored. No mainstream newspaper has reviewed it. There's that media blackout again. Yet through quotes, hard facts, and impressive research, they prove their case beyond reasonable doubt.

Jim and Gerry are far from alone in their views that the war was deliberately prolonged. The great poet Lieutenant Siegfried Sassoon wrote an open letter of protest in 1917:

'I am making this statement as an act of wilful defiance of military authority because I believe that the war is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it. I am a soldier, convinced that I am acting on behalf of soldiers. I believe that the war upon which I entered as a war of defence and liberation has now become a war of aggression and conquest. '

By comparison, it's often claimed that the generals and politicians were stupid and incompetent and *'sleepwalked into war'.* It's a useful excuse, sometimes suggested by historians to get the Establishment off the hook, but it's actually nonsense. Whilst personal stupidity certainly played a role, as J. B. Priestley comments above, the terrible conflict was actually calculated, deliberate and horribly clever – as Jim and Gerry show in their books. Just like the way modern wars are created. No one ever *'sleepwalks into war.'*

I refer in the story to the possibility that the war was also motivated by a desire to cull the population, because they were striking for better working conditions and were seen as a threat to the Establishment. I quote General Roberts, who praised war as, *'a way to get rid of the great human rottenness that is rife in our industrial cities.'* Cities like Dundee, perhaps? It's rare for Establishment figures to talk so openly, usually they know how to keep their mouths shut. But sometimes they just can't help themselves and their masks slip.

General Haig was certainly indifferent to the huge losses. *'We lament too much over death. We should regard it as a change to another room… Three years of war and the loss of one-tenth of the manhood of the nation is not too great a price to pay in so great a cause.'*

TRADING WITH THE ENEMY

Adam Hochschild's powerful *To End All Wars* (2011) inspired Robbie's letter revealing trading with the enemy during the conflict. On Page 161, Hochschild quotes similar correspondence between the British and German armies. The binoculars used by the British at the Battle of Loos were actually supplied by the German enemy in exchange for rubber!

This cannot be explained away as an isolated incident, a single error of judgement. It was going on all the time. There are numerous other sources that show Britain, Germany and France were all regularly trading arms materials and doing deals with each other during the war: High explosives, poison gas, guns, aluminium for Zeppelins, barbed wire, Zeiss sniper lenses. And more.

For example, *'French bauxite also entered Switzerland freely during the war, was there manufactured into aluminium, and then shipped into Germany for the construction of submarines.' Merchants of Death* by H. C. Engelbrecht and F. C. Hanighen (1934).

'Vickers had been supplying the Turkish artillery with shells which were fired into the Australian, New Zealand and British troops as they were scrambling up Anzac Cove… their weapons mashed up into bloody pulp… the flower of Anzac, the youth of Australia and New Zealand, yes, and of the youth of our own country.' Iron, Blood and Profits by George Seldes (1934).

Trading with the enemy is, of course, treason. This is noticeably not a subject covered by today's historians because it would destroy their claim that World War One was a just war.

THE NEXT RAGTIME SOLDIER STORY?

You must have wondered, as I have, how soldiers could face going over the top to almost certain death. How is that possible? It seems insane. It's heroism far above and beyond the call of duty.

In many cases, like at Loos, I'm sure it was youthful optimism, fighting spirit, comradeship, not wanting to let their mates down, pride in their city, their regiment, their King and Country that motivated them.

But there are darker aspects to the war that I didn't know about when I wrote *Charley's War*, that I'd like to return to in future stories about the Ragtime Soldier and his comrades in the aftermath of war.

One of them is the widespread military supply of cocaine to the troops – *'Forced March'* – issued to British, French and German soldiers via a factory in neutral Holland. See:

https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/xdvnd3/holland-was-the-worlds-biggest-coke-manufacturer

Here's what researcher Connie Braam said:

'Forced March packed more punch: it contained both caffeine and cocaine. And that combination really gets you going. I checked it with pharmacologists, and they told me this stuff made you crazy. These pills were really heavy. And millions were made. Which was handy for usage, because taking cocaine in powder form isn't very practical in the trenches… And perhaps a lot of soldiers wouldn't take the stuff voluntarily. So I suspect that in a lot of cases it was mixed with rum. A lot of soldiers were given a mug of rum before they went over the top and out of the trenches. And sometimes it would be rum with coke. Mixing alcohol with cocaine doubles the effects of the stuff. But that's not something that's reflected in the movies or in general knowledge about the Great War.

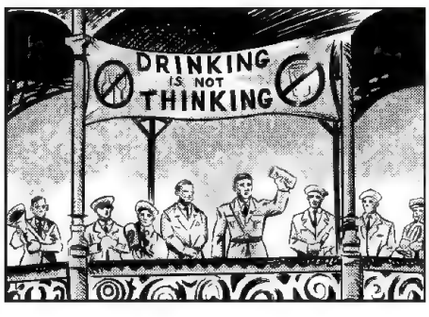
Hundreds of thousands heavily addicted soldiers were walking around through Europe after the war. I found articles about that in The Times. One article reported about hundreds of addicted veterans roaming the British streets to rob pharmacists.'

It's known that troops were sometimes given the tablets to help them complete long marches, but this is something altogether different, and it would explain the huge number of tablets produced in Holland and sold to the different combatants. So I can see my next story where our Ragtime Soldier finds an addicted and crazy comrade breaking into a chemist's during the aftermath. Robbie learns the shocking truth about why his friend is an addict – after he regularly took his 'rum' ration before 'Going over the top' during the Battle of the Somme. Influenced by Scrymgeour, and having taken the Pledge to please his mum, Robbie was teetotal at the time and thus he was not affected by *'Forced March'.*

Revealing the darker side of war doesn't take away from soldiers' courage: it can only add to our understanding of what happened to them. And make us value these heroes all the more as we appreciate just how badly they were treated.

Today, anything that might challenge the Establishment view of the Great War as a tragic, terrible, yet noble and righteous war for freedom simply never happened.

Yet the politicians, generals and arms manufacturers who deliberately started and prolonged the war, 'sacrificing' an entire generation of Ragtime Soldiers for their power and profit, clearly should have faced a Nuremburg-style War Crimes Tribunal after the conflict. Instead, they got away with their crimes. ***Scot-free.*** ■



CASUALTIES OF WAR

STORY BY
CALUM LAIRD

ART & LETTERS BY
ELLIOT BALSON

IN 1914 YOUNG BRITISH MEN FLOCK TO THE FLAG. THEY JOIN UP, ALL MATES TOGETHER, ANXIOUS TO BE IN "BERLIN BY CHRISTMAS".

NEWPORT FOUNDRY PALS REGIMENT

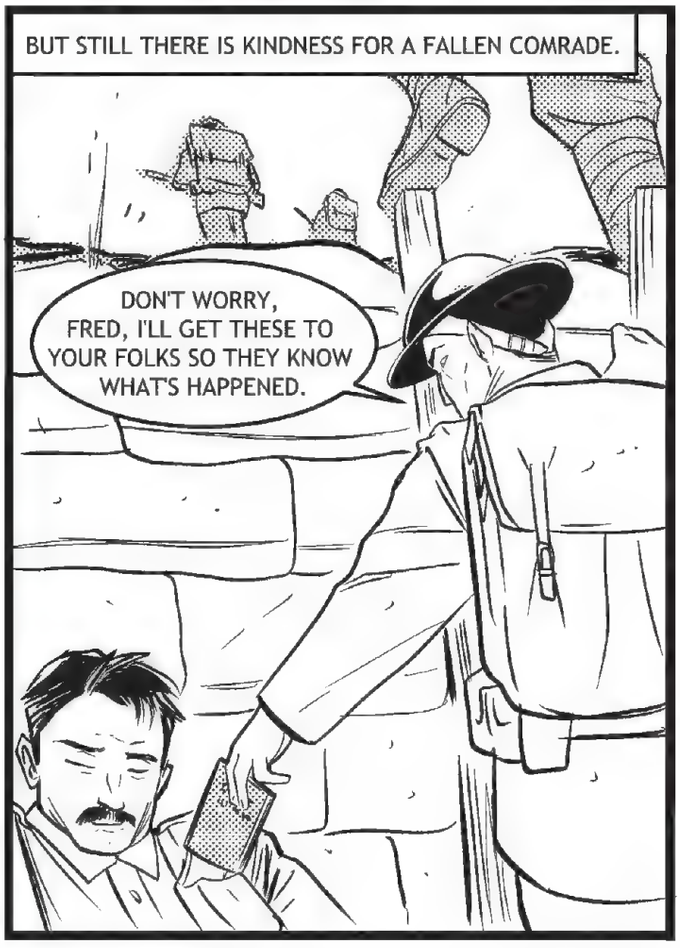
THEY MARCH AWAY FULL OF CONFIDENCE.

CONFIDENCE QUESTIONED A LITTLE AS THE FRONT LINE DRAWS NEAR.

AND EATEN AWAY FURTHER AS THEY WAIT FOR THE ORDER...
OVER THE TOP!
URRGH!
MY GOD, I NEVER THOUGHT IT WOULD BE LIKE THIS!

IN NO-MAN'S-LAND COME THE CASUALTIES.
TOM!

MORE COME IN THE ENEMY TRENCHES.


BUT STILL THERE IS KINDNESS FOR A FALLEN COMRADE.
DON'T WORRY, FRED, I'LL GET THESE TO YOUR FOLKS SO THEY KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED.

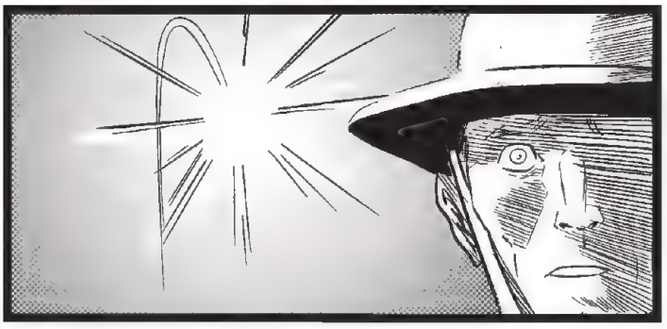
ANOTHER DAY BRINGS ANOTHER ATTACK.

ANOTHER CASUALTY.
ANOTHER HALF-PENNY BOOK.
ACTIVE SERVICE
SAFELY IN HIS PACK.
SOON THOUGH THIS IS NOT ENOUGH.
YOU WON'T BE NEEDING THAT IRON CROSS ANYMORE, FRITZ. YOU CAN KEEP YOUR FAMILY SNAPS, THOUGH.
COMES THE FATEFUL DAY.
URRGH. HELP ME.
EH? AIN'T YOU DEAD?
YOU ARE NOW, CHUM.

BEHIND THE LINES, SUDDENLY ALONE... OR NOT?
WHO'S THERE?

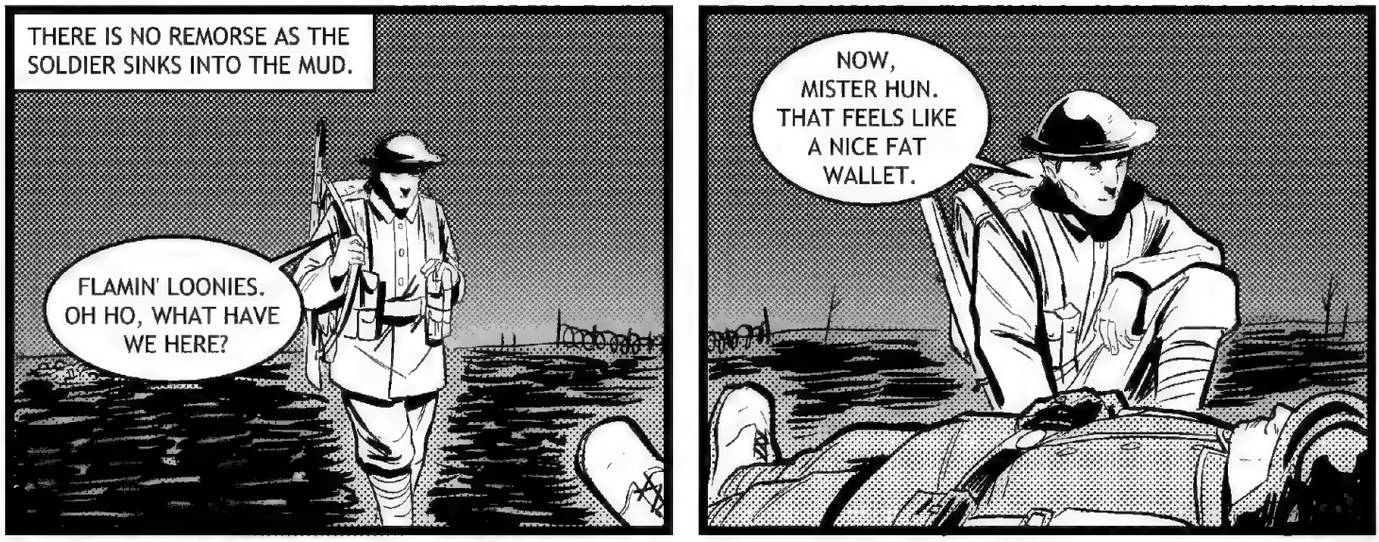
AHEAD, STOCK STILL A GHOSTLY FIGURE STANDS.
BUT... YOU'RE DEAD. WHAT DO YOU WANT?

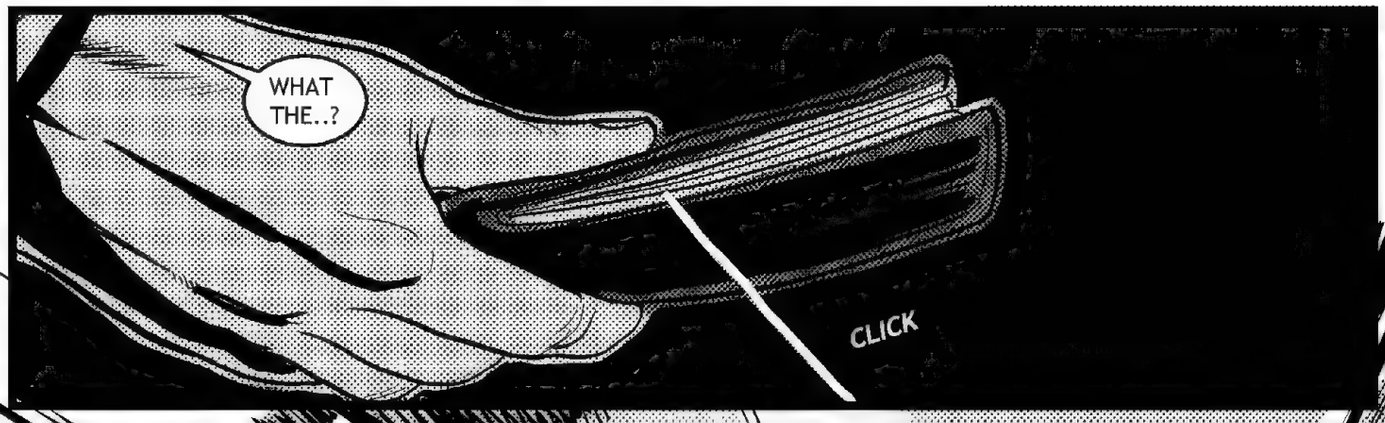
DO YOU WANT YOUR STUFF BACK? HERE, TAKE IT. TAKE IT ALL.



SHELL-SHOCK CASE,EH?

GET OUT OF MY WAY!

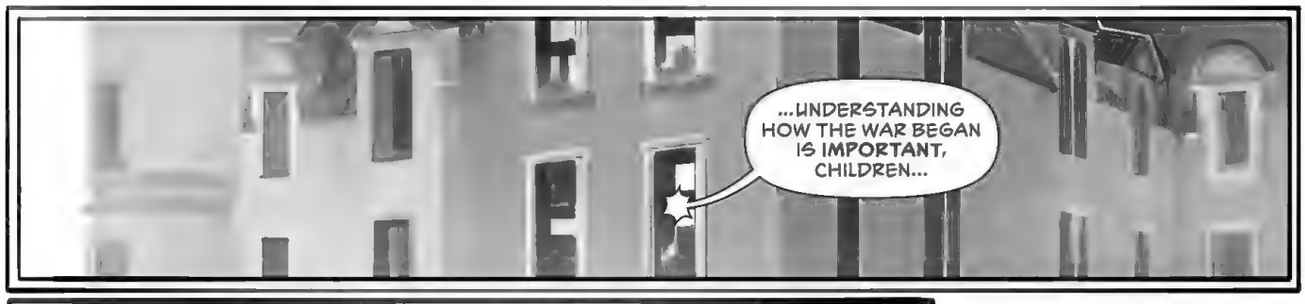

THERE IS NO REMORSE AS THE SOLDIER SINKS INTO THE MUD.
FLAMIN' LOONIES. OH HO, WHAT HAVE WE HERE?
NOW, MISTER HUN. THAT FEELS LIKE A NICE FAT WALLET.

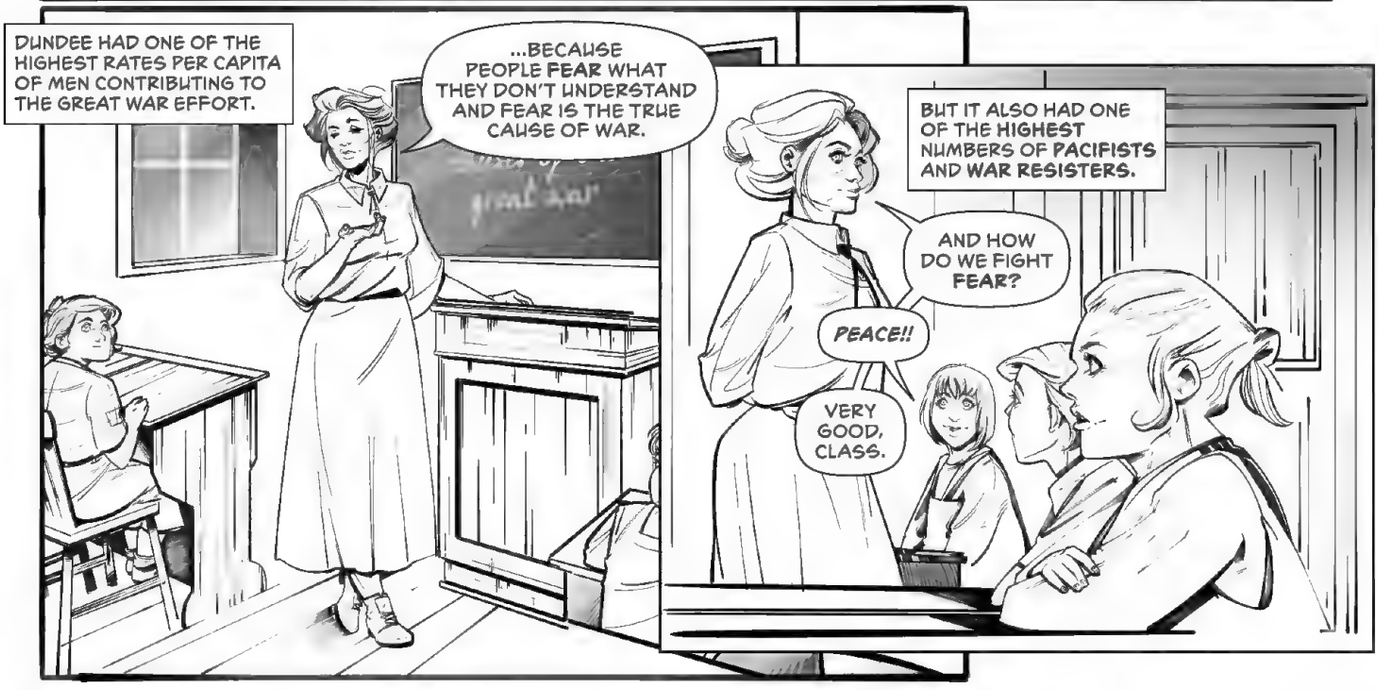


THAT NIGHT A LIFE IS SNUFFED OUT BY A BOOBY-TRAP.

IN TRUTH, THOUGH, HE HAD DIED A LONG TIME BEFORE, HIS HUMANITY OBLITERATED – ANOTHER OF THE CASUALTIES OF WAR...

THE END




DUNDEE HAD ONE OF THE HIGHEST RATES PER CAPITA OF MEN CONTRIBUTING TO THE GREAT WAR EFFORT.
...BECAUSE PEOPLE FEAR WHAT THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND AND FEAR IS THE TRUE CAUSE OF WAR.
BUT IT ALSO HAD ONE OF THE HIGHEST NUMBERS OF PACIFISTS AND WAR RESISTERS.
AND HOW DO WE FIGHT FEAR?
PEACE!!
VERY GOOD, CLASS.

BEFORE THE WAR, WOMEN MADE UP HALF OF THE WORKFORCE IN DUNDEE, EARNING IT THE NICKNAME, THE
Women's Toon
THERE YOU ARE, ELMA!
HOW DO YOU ALWAYS MANAGE TO MAKE US LATE? THE WSPU* MEETING WON'T WAIT FOR US.
SORRY, DOTTIE!
*WOMEN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL UNION.
AND THOSE WAR LOVERS HAVE NO IDEA WHAT'S COMING THEIR WAY!
I DON'T IMAGINE IT WILL BE AN EXCITING PROTEST, MISS MUNITIONETTE.
BUT STILL! I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY STOPPED FIGHTING FOR THE VOTE AND JUMPED IN BED WITH THE WAR EFFORT!

SCRIPT: HAILEY AUSTIN & ERIN KEEPERS
ART: ANNA MOROZOVA
LETTERS: EMMELINE PANKHURST

THE WSPU ISN'T LIKE IT WAS BEFORE. I'D LIKE TA'VE CHUCKED A GOOGIE AT OLD CHURCHILL!
ELMA FINNIE, YOU'RE LUCKY I DON'T TELL YOUR MOTHER YOU'RE TALKING LIKE THAT.
SHE'D HAND ME THE EGG HER OWN SELF IF WE COULD SPARE THE RATIONS.
I WOULD THINK YOUR WORK AT THE FACTORY WOULD KEEP YOU TOO BUSY FOR SUCH THOUGHTS. HOW'S IT GOING?
OCH, YOU KNOW. SAME OLD. NOT ENOUGH IRON, TOO MUCH TIME.
BUT THEY'VE BEEN TAKING DOWN ALL THE IRON FENCES IN DUNDEE! HOW DO YOU NOT HAVE ENOUGH IRON TO MAKE MUNITIONS?
BECAUSE WOMEN ARE EFFICIENT! THERE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN A MUNITIONS SHORTAGE IF THEY LET US WORK LAST YEAR!
OH NO! MARY'S AT IT AGAIN!
YOUNG MAN! YOU SHOULD BE ABROAD PROTECTING US, NOT IN THE CITY CENTRE SHIRKING YOUR DUTY TO THE NATION! SHAME ON YOU!
JOIN THE WAR EFFORT!
I KNOW THE ARMY PROMISED THE WSPU WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE IF THEY RECRUIT, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHY MARY BELIEVED THEM!
IT'S A CRYING SHAME. SHE'S JUST SENDING WEE BOYS TO THEIR DEATHS ALL DAY AND BLAMING US FOR NO HELPIN' HER.
AH, LADIES. FINALLY COME TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR EFFORT? IT'S NOT JUST MEN WHO HAVE A DUTY TO THEIR COUNTRY!
THAT MOUTHY COW! WHY I OTTA-
EASY, ELMA! COME ON...

MUGGIE SHAW, THE CURRENT LEADER OF THE **DUNDEE WOMEN'S WAR RELIEF COMMITTEE...**

...HAD BEEN ONE OF THE MOST **ACTIVE SUFFRAGETTE DISRUPTORS** BEFORE THE WAR.

WHEN THE WAR STARTED, **THE SUFFRAGETTE MOVEMENT** ANNOUNCED THAT THEY WOULD STOP **DISRUPTING** AND **FOCUS** ON THE WAR EFFORT.

THAT NEVER SAT RIGHT WITH **MUGGIE.**

FINALLY, SOME ACTION!
SMASH!
THAT'S IT! MUGGIE SHAW, YER BARRED!
DIDN'T WANNA DRINK HERE ANYHOW.
MEANIE'S BAR
SMASH!
URGH!
CHEERS, LADIES!
?!
HAHAHAHA!
WHEN THE WAR ENDED THE MEN CAME HOME OR WERE IMMORTALISED IN THE WAR MEMORIAL. WOMEN GOT THE VOTE, BUT LOST THEIR JOBS. AFTER THE WAR, DUNDEE WAS A WOMEN'S TOON NO MORE...
THE END.

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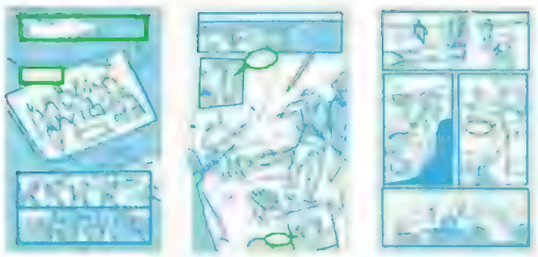
THUMBNAILS & DESIGNS

Thumbnails: Gary Welsh

Character Designs: Anna Morozova



Thumbnails & Character Designs: Elliot Balson

CONTRIBUTORS

PAT MILLS is the creator and first editor of *2000AD*. He developed *Judge Dredd* and is the writer-creator of many of *2000AD*'s most popular stories. He also created *Action* and co-created *Battle Picture Weekly* and *Misty*. He was the key writer on *Crisis,* with his political thriller about transnational food corporations, *Third World War*.
www.millsverse.com

IAN KENNEDY joined DC Thomson's in 1949. During the 1950's Kennedy mainly illustrated war comics. From the 1970s onward, Kennedy began to specialise in science fiction comics, regularly producing work for *2000AD* and *Starlord.* He has also worked for *Warlord, Starblazer, Battle, Eagle* and continues to work for *Commando* to this day.

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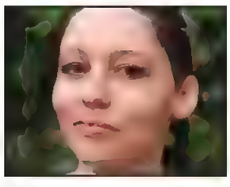
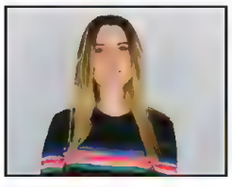
Image: Letty Wilson



ERIN KEEPERS has been active in the comics field since 2014 when she graduated from the University of Dundee with a Masters in Comic Book Studies. Most of her comics are about outer space and/or feminism. Find her work at www.ErinKeepers.com or on Twitter and Instagram @ErinKeepers.



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@_annamorozova

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https://www.artstation.com/ellbalson

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GREAT WAR DUNDEE

RAGTIME SOLDIER

"Joe's an incredibly hard act to follow, but Gary and Phil have cracked it. Today, Charleys War is selling more strongly than ever, which proves there is a huge audience for anti-war stories, particularly among younger readers. Despite this commercial success, the genre is still sadly neglected in favour of escapist fantasy. I guess because of editors' and publishers' personal preference, even if their audience feels differently. I hope Ragtime Soldier goes some way to changing things and encouraging others to produce stories about the genuine, real life heroes who were our forefathers. There are so many more stories about the truth of WWI waiting to be told..."

Pat Mills

Robbie McTaggart is a talented player of Ragtime music, the rebellious new music loved by teenagers; hence why the troops called themselves 'The Ragtime Infantry'. It was the hot music of its day and therefore was hated by parents and the older generation.

Robbie is also a member of Dundee's legendary Black Watch – the Fighting Fourth – who went over the top to the battle cry of 'Marmalade!'

'Ragtime Soldier' is a story with a twist because it also deals with an incredible event after the war when a member of the War Resistance movement sensationally beat Winston Churchill in the Dundee election and became Member of Parliament.

Also featured in this publication is 'The Women's Toon', a story about the Suffragette movement in Dundee, and 'Casualties of War', which is a tale from the World War One trenches.

Funding raised by The National Lottery
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GREAT WAR DUNDEE

COMIC SCENE Your Complete Guide to Comics

UNIVERSE
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WHACKOMAN!

BY MARC JACKSON

DURING AN EPIC BATTLE WITH SHIELA THE STEALER, OUR HERO DISCOVERED NONE OTHER THAN HIS SIDE-KICK, BUGSY, IN AN UNUSUAL PLACE...

"SHE KIDNAPPED ME ON MY WAY HOME FROM THE HOSPITAL* IT'S NOT JUST FINE SILVER-WARE THAT SHE PUTS IN HER BAG!"
ZIP!
*AFTER BEING IN TRACTION SINCE EPISODE 7

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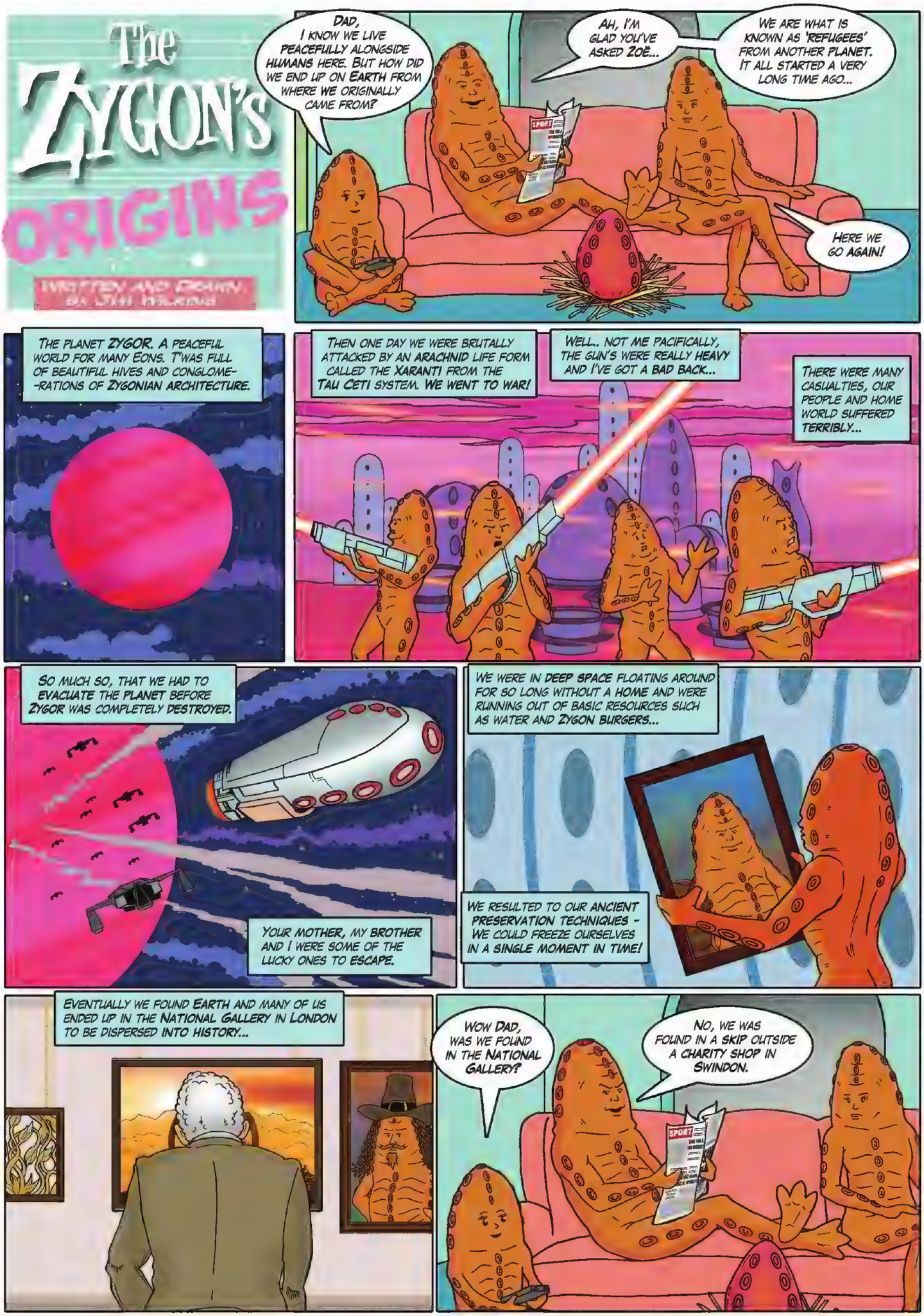
The ZYGON's ORIGINS
WRITTEN AND DRAWN
DAD, I KNOW WE LIVE PEACEFULLY ALONGSIDE HUMANS HERE. BUT HOW DID WE END UP ON EARTH FROM WHERE WE ORIGINALLY CAME FROM?
AH, I'M GLAD YOU'VE ASKED ZOË...
WE ARE WHAT IS KNOWN AS 'REFUGEES' FROM ANOTHER PLANET. IT ALL STARTED A VERY LONG TIME AGO...
HERE WE GO AGAIN!
THE PLANET ZYGOR. A PEACEFUL WORLD FOR MANY EONS. T'WAS FULL OF BEAUTIFUL HIVES AND CONGLOME--RATIONS OF ZYGONIAN ARCHITECTURE.
THEN ONE DAY WE WERE BRUTALLY ATTACKED BY AN ARACHNID LIFE FORM CALLED THE XARANTI FROM THE TAU CETI SYSTEM. WE WENT TO WAR!
WELL.. NOT ME PACIFICALLY, THE GUN'S WERE REALLY HEAVY AND I'VE GOT A BAD BACK...
THERE WERE MANY CASUALTIES, OUR PEOPLE AND HOME WORLD SUFFERED TERRIBLY...
SO MUCH SO, THAT WE HAD TO EVACUATE THE PLANET BEFORE ZYGOR WAS COMPLETELY DESTROYED.
YOUR MOTHER, MY BROTHER AND I WERE SOME OF THE LUCKY ONES TO ESCAPE.
WE WERE IN DEEP SPACE FLOATING AROUND FOR SO LONG WITHOUT A HOME AND WERE RUNNING OUT OF BASIC RESOURCES SUCH AS WATER AND ZYGON BURGERS...
WE RESULTED TO OUR ANCIENT PRESERVATION TECHNIQUES - WE COULD FREEZE OURSELVES IN A SINGLE MOMENT IN TIME!
EVENTUALLY WE FOUND EARTH AND MANY OF US ENDED UP IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY IN LONDON TO BE DISPERSED INTO HISTORY...
WOW DAD, WAS WE FOUND IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY?
NO, WE WAS FOUND IN A SKIP OUTSIDE A CHARITY SHOP IN SWINDON.
SPORT

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By Russ Sheath

AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE

In the battle of guitar Vs geek, no two musicians reign more supreme than Scott Ian and Kirk Hammett. ComicScene's Russ Sheath speaks with two of rock's most recognisable names about their friendship and shared love of pop culture.

Scott Ian, founder of legendary thrash metal pioneers Anthrax, has sung about Judge Dredd, appeared in The Walking Dead, written an autobiography entitled "I'm The Man," and is one of the most respected names in rock music.

Kirk Hammett is lead guitarist with one the most successful bands of all time, Metallica. An avid horror movie aficionado, Kirk has showcased his renowned collection of memorabilia in the book 'Too Much Horror Business', hosted his own film festival and remains an inspiration to millions of musicians around the world.

With an lasting friendship that stretches over 35 years the pair have endured band disputes, enjoyed million selling records and survived endless tours around the globe, yet they still find time to come together and share the passion for comics, film and pop culture that spawned their guitar wielding allegiance.

Russ Sheath meets the axe men to discover the truth behind a brotherhood forged on the anvil of geekdom and metal.

Russ: Guys, thank you for taking the time to talk with me. How are you both?

Scott: I'm on the road and Napalm Deth are about to play in 25 minutes, so we should get this underway before they go on stage as I'm in a quiet place right now (laughs).

Kirk: Metallica have the summer off, the first in ten years which is kind of nice. Usually we are playing in Europe so I've been sitting around playing my guitar, trying to stay healthy and waiting for horror movies to come out. I make my weekly trips to the comic store and I do a lot of surfing.

Russ: There's a part of me that likes to think that, because of your shared fandom and friendship you are calling each other up with a "Hey! Did you see this week's Game of Thrones?"

Scott: That totally does happen all the time. I remember when Lost was on the two of us couldn't shut up about it.

Kirk: You turned me onto Lost bro! I can always depend on Scott for his opinions because we've had similar tastes for as long as I can remember. Scott and I have been....

Scott: Simpatico.

Kirk: Yeah! We always seem to be tapping into the same vein, so when Scott has an opinion on something I definitely listen.

Scott: And vice versa. I feel the same way.

Russ: Of all the bands out there and all the members of different bands who know each other, you guys have always been genuine friends, right? Did your shared love of pop culture play a part in that friendship?

Scott: I think I can speak for Kirk too here... we both have so many friends who are in bands but also where you know people and it's superficial! Kirk and I met ages ago and right out of the gate we became friends and maintained and grew that over the decades.

Kirk: I've known Scott as long as I've known James (Hetfield) and Lars (Ulrich, Metallica co-founders). When I flew out to Jamaica, Queens to audition, the next day Cliff Burton (original Metallica bass player) introduced me to Scott and Danny from Anthrax. Cliff said "This is Scott, he gave us a toaster oven and they gave us a fridge too." As soon as we started talking we hit it off right off the bat.

We have to include Cliff in this relationship too, because people don't understand that Cliff Burton was huge into horror and HP Lovecraft and his favourite movie was Dawn of The Dead. So it wasn't just myself and Scott, but more so myself, Scott and Cliff.

Scott: It was very much the three of us back then for sure.

Kirk: Very much so. We would go out and have crazy nights, just the three of us. We had one epic night in Europe, in London, that I'll never forget. There's been a consciousness between ourselves where we have the same aesthetic and I love Scott like a brother for that. With Scott and I, it definitely transcends anything business related or anything else. I could be a fucking....hairdresser and Scott could be another hairdresser and we'd still come together and talk about the same stuff.

Scott: For sure.

Kirk: One of the epic things that solidified this relationship was back in 1983. The Evil Dead had just come out and was playing in a theatre in New Jersey. Remember that Scott?

Scott: I do.

Kirk: I went with you, Cliff and Danny and that was the very first time that film had just come out and I remember the magnitude of it and all of us just being totally blown away. I remember realising what a great film we had just seen and I knew that I had found my tribe and that I was going to be hanging out with them. We've been into the same books, the same toys, the same comics, the same music.

Russ: So how come we've never seen some kind of collaboration between you, creatively or otherwise. How about a comic book store?

Kirk: I'm waiting for Scott to ask me. I wouldn't rule out any collaboration between Scott and I on any platform. We could come together and do a book, a comic book, an album, a movie, a toy. Anything is possible in my and Scott's worlds.

Scott: Lets open a comic book store in Hawaii as that would be an excuse for me to get a place there.

Kirk: There you go. We have two comic book stores here and we need another one.

Kirk: Anything between us would be such an easy collaboration because like I said, we're just cut from the same cloth. It's a very, very cool thing. Even though I haven't seen Scott in a while our relationship is one where we can pick it up right from the last time we saw each other. To me that's special and shows a type of loyalty that I look for in relationships in general.

Scott: I never feel like we're starting over and It doesn't matter how much time has passed.

Kirk: We've been friends for so long and it's always been great.

Russ: For each of you, which came first, was it the comics and pop culture or was it music?

Scott: For me comics came first. Marvel Comics were where I learned how to read in the late 60s. I knew about music but at the ripe old age of 5 or 6 I didn't care so much about it yet, but comics and horror I was way into. My Mom loved horror movies when she was a kid and she read Mad Magazine, so I kind of learned all that stuff from her at a really young age. Music came later in the early 70s, which is when I got bit by that bug, but comics came first for me.

Kirk: For me, its a pretty similar story. I had been reading comic books since I was five or six years old. I was an early reader, so when I went to the smoke shop with my Dad one day and I saw a bunch of comic books, I was naturally drawn to them. I was fully immersed into the whole Marvel Comics thing, Creepy and horror comics, monster magazines, foreign movies, the whole bit. That was my life until I was about 12 or 13. When I was just about to move out of San Francisco in about 1975, I remember that I saw a poster of these four guys looking really crazy and I said to my friend, "Look at those four guys!" And my friend said, "Oh! That's KISS!"

Six months later I got KISS Alive and it turned me onto a different kind of stuff than they were playing on the AM radio, which I was listening to day and night. My parents would only turn on the radio when there was no one in the house, so it would seem someone was in the house. When I came home from school the radio would be on and I would just leave it on, so I was a radio kid until I discovered KISS and this whole other realm of hard rock that meant so much more to me.

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"For me, **the first comics that I brought** were Spider-Man and Fantastic Four"

Scott: I was exactly the same. My parents listened to pretty good music like they had the Woodstock soundtrack album, Elton John, Bob Dylan and the Band and all that stuff. So there was music around and I liked it, but it didn't grab me by the balls until I saw KISS on television in 1975 doing Rock and Roll All Nite and I lost my fucking mind.

Russ: If KISS hadn't worn the makeup and hadn't had that connection to the comic book imagery that you guys loved, do you think the appeal would have been there?

Scott: I think I still would have liked it, but it wouldn't have hooked me as deep.

Kirk: I wouldn't have given it the time of day to tell the truth. What really attracted me to them initially was the make up. If they had just looked like a bunch of regular guys, I wouldn't have been curious.

Scott: Right.

Kirk: The makeup was a pretty big draw to me being curious to what they were all about and thank god for that.

Scott: It's like they knew it was like a mainline into every kids cerebral cortex at that moment, the mix of horror, comics and rock and roll in one fiery, bloody package.

Russ: Because you guys actually know Gene Simmons and KISS, do you think all that was part of the design of the band, to make them appeal to that demographic?

Scott: They knew what they were doing. Gene had been a Marvel kid and was into comics and horror too, so they knew what they were doing. Oddly enough Kirk and I met Gene and Paul together on the same night in 1987.

Kirk: Boy, were we grovelling. I just have to say, Gene was just like us but was a generation before. He was raised on comics and horror and he liked music, to some extent he had some of those same influences that Scott and I had.

Russ: It may not have been your first comic or book, but do each of you remember the thing that hooked you and turned an interest into something that you'd come to love?

Kirk: For me, the first comics that I brought were Spider-Man and Fantastic Four. But the first book that I read when I was 8 years old and which really blew me away was Edgar Allan Poe. I couldn't believe how cool it was.

Scott: My first comics were the same thing, Spider-Man, Hulk, Fantastic Four, Thor and The X-Men, those were my big five. As a kid The Hulk was my favourite but as far as a book goes it was either The Hobbit or Poe's Tell-Tale Heart. Those two are ones I read and where I realised there was a whole other world of stuff for me to experience out there.

Kirk: Tell-Tale Heart is an excellent, excellent story, one of my favourites.

Russ: In regards to comics was it the stories, the art, the combination of those, what was it that lured you in?

Kirk: For me it was the whole package, the art, the story, the execution, the delivery. The feeling that you were part of something even though it was just a comic book, when you read the story you got emotionally involved. It felt like you were a part of something every month when you went to the stand to look for the next issue, like you were a part of the story and you needed to find out where the story was going. That was one feeling that I got from comic books that I just loved, that month to month anticipation.

Scott: I was emotionally connected to Bruce Banner and Peter Parker. I'm serious! What Marvel did that was so different. As a kid I didn't read comics from the 1940's, I read what was on the racks. I did read some DC books, but I just had a deeper connection to the Marvel books because the characters had problems, they had angst! Peter Parker was just a kid, Johnny Storm was just a kid and The X-Men were all fucked up.

Kirk: Yeah.

Scott: You felt that these characters had

real life problems along with the fact that they had super powers, that was something that Marvel did that was so different and enabled a whole generation of kids to connect with their books.

Russ: For each you, what's the one thing that still give you a warm fuzzy feeling and sense of nostalgia?

Kirk: I'll tell you right now, what takes me right there is whenever I walk into a comic book store. It doesn't even matter if it's one that specialises in vintage comics or not, it could be a store that just does current comics, but I get that feeling all over again from when I was a kid. That sense of anticipation, looking at the covers and deciding what I am going to buy and read, I get that whenever I go into a comic shop. Then, when I finally sit down and read a pile of comics, I am like that ten year old kid again. I love it!

Scott: For me, Jack Kirby's artwork gives me the same feeling. As a kid I was reading so many comics that Jack Kirby was drawing, there's just something about his art, there's a connection straight to that kid part of me. I see Kirby's art and I'm instantly excited. I follow all these things on Instagram and I'm always looking stuff up online, just seeing his artwork and the energy he brought to drawing, nobody's ever done anything like that and it takes me back to being 8 years old whenever I see it.

Kirk: What's great about jack Kirby is his use of negative space and use of colour blocking and shading, there's a dynamic he was able to capture on one page. Another favourite of mine was Steve Ditko.

Scott: He's my number 2 favourite for sure.

Kirk: I loved Steve Ditko's Spider-Man and I also loved the Doctor Strange stuff too.

Scott: They were both so great at creating otherworldly universes.

Russ: Is there a holy grail piece that each of you would like to add to your collections?

Kirk: There's a list of about 25 movie posters that have not been discovered or found that I'm constantly on vigilant watch for. For me, sometimes it's just nice to want something and know you aren't going to get it (laughs). I would love to have a billboard size poster from Frankenstein and the fantasy of that is nice, but I know for a fact that there's a 99% chance that one doesn't even exist.

Scott: I was just at a book store in Bangor, Maine, where the guy specialises in Stephen King limited, vintage and first editions. The store had this copy of 'The Plant', which was this three issue limited thing that King did ages ago and you could get it if you were on his Christmas card list, where he wrote this short story in three parts and released it over a number of years. He did it all by himself, stapled them together and I think there's only 100 copies of this three issue thing that he only sent to people he knew. Coming across a full set of those is next to impossible. This book store in Bangor had a set of the three that had already been sold to somebody, but the guy was away on a business trip and let the store owner keep it on display. The owner took it out and let me read it and hold it. I knew I couldn't buy it, which was kind of a relief as I knew that if it was for sale I'd have a huge challenge deciding if I was going to spend that kind of money on these three little booklets.

Kirk: Decisions, decisions!

Russ: Kirk, for you it was the classic Universal monsters that provided a hook into your obsession but those movies weren't contemporary when you were a kid, they came from the 30's and 40's…

Kirk: They weren't contemporary in that they had movie releases, but the thing that happened in the late 50s, up until the mid 70s was there was a rediscovery of those classic movies and they had re-releases in theatres and on various TV channels. There was a whole push by Universal to get this stuff on these various horror shows across the country so they could be shown on television. So it might have not seemed contemporary on paper, as most of those movies were released in the 30s, but by the 50s, 60s and 70s they were everywhere and they felt contemporary.

Scott: I remember, growing up in the late 60s in New York City, on the WPIX on channel 11 on I believe, they had a show on Saturday called Chiller Theatre and there was another one called Creature Feature. They used to show all these Universal movies, the Hammer films, everything! So when all my friends were watching cartoons I was at home, with my brother and my mother, watching horror movies.

Kirk: Remember Dark Shadows? I love the werewolf. I would come home from Catholic school, turn on the television, and there was Dark Shadows in all it's satanic splendour. it was such a great medication for my Catholic school experience (laughs).

Russ: Scott, with Anthrax there's been a lasting association with the British comic book character Judge Dredd from the comic 2000AD. How did that all come about?

Scott: It would have been during my first time in the UK and that was the first time I ever came across 2000AD and was exposed to Judge Dredd. Any time I was back in the UK after that I would try to pick up as many copies of 2000AD as I could. At that time in New York, although we had Forbidden Planet, they weren't getting copies of 2000AD in yet and I would always complain. So any time I came to the UK I would catch up.

Russ: What was the appeal of Judge Dredd?

Kirk: He was fucking cool.

To be Continued Next Issue...

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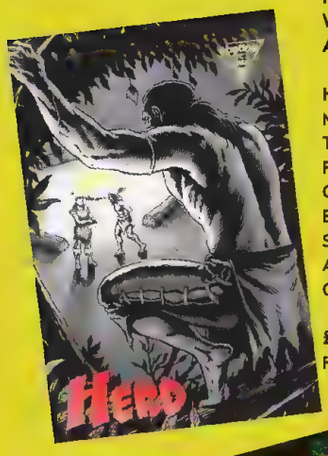

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WRITER: GEOFF RICHARDS
ART: PETER HABJAN

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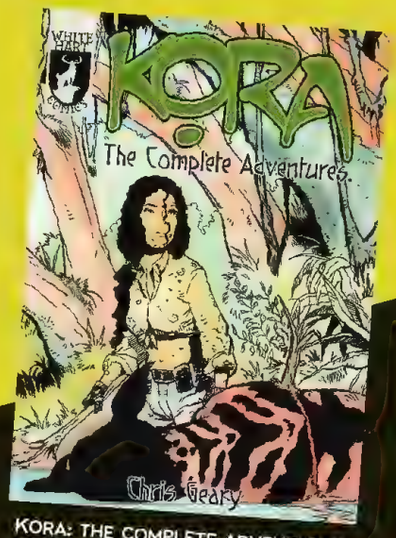

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THE STATE OF INDEPENDENTS

The UK's independent and small press comics scene has never been more exciting. We bring you a look at some of the best!

"You may have the best concepts, but you need to tell a great story."

Alex Thomas looks at the secret of a great first issue

Writing the first issue of a small press comic is no mean feat. Not only do you need to have a gem of an idea in the first place, but you also have to have the passion and motivation to see it through to completion - writing, drawing, colouring, lettering, editing and publishing it. But what are the secrets to a good first issue? Here at ComicScene we see dozens of new small press comics every month, but here 's what we look for in a debut:

1. Introduce your world

While you may know your story inside and out, the reader does not. So it is up to you to tell them about it. A first issue is all about introducing the world you have created to the readers. If you have a complex, multi-levelled society use things like an intro page or a dialogue heavy conversation to explain things.

2. Create strong characters

While world building is important, characters are everything. If you have strong characters who readers can relate to, empathise with, or downright loathe, then you are half way there. In fact character development can be the entire focus of a debut issue, especially if you are using strong archetypes or characters with a well defined traits.

These great debut issues all features strong characters, concept and originality

3. Tell a story

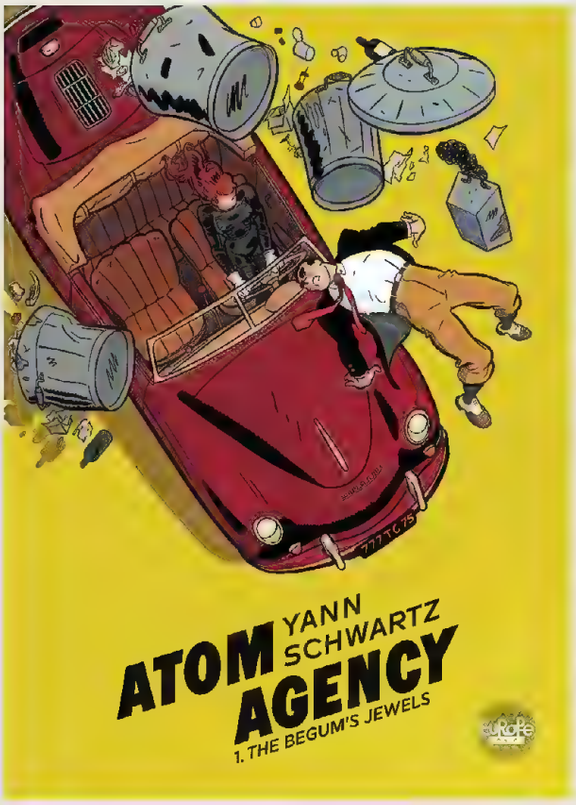
You may have the best world and the most dynamic characters, but you still need to tell a story. That story may be built around explaining the world or introducing the characters, but you must do both. Without a story your comic will have no direction, or purpose and could end up just being a series of meaningless set pieces.

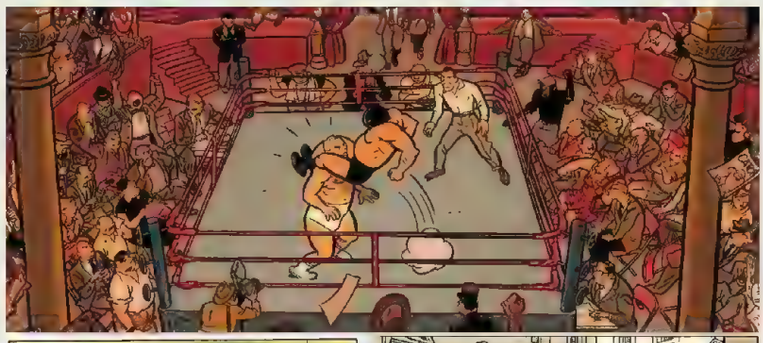
4. Something original

It's important to come up with something unique. We're not saying that every book needs to be the second coming of Watchmen, but a gem of originality can go a long way. Your USP might be your lead character, the culture of your world, or even the printing of your book. If you use a familiar genre like superheroes, then try looking at it from a different angle. Don't just rehash what's gone before.

5. A reason to come back

Even if you are working on a one shot, it is vital to create a reason for readers to return. If you are writing a long series, then include a cliffhanger, and be sure to leave a number of questions unanswered to entice people back - but don't leave it so open ended that readers don't know what is going on. And don't pose so many questions that they lose the plot completely. If you are working on a one-shot, leave the ending open so you could potentially return to these characters in the future.





THE NEXT MORNING, AT THE LOCAL BISTRO...
I'LL HAVE AN ESPRESSO!
A SIDI ERAHIM, PLEASE.
DRAT! THE SOLIDARITY OF THE DIASPORA IS A BIT SHAKY. WE WON'T GET FAR ON THAT!
WE'LL HAVE TO MAKE DO, MIMI!
CAFÉ

Atom Agency vol 1 The Begum's Jewels

Publisher: Europe Comics
Writer: Yann
Artist: Schwartz
Price: £3.99 from ComiXology

If you had to show someone a perfect example of a Franco Belgian Bandes dessinée, then you could do a lot worse than pointing them in the direction of Yann and Schwartz's effortlessly cool Atom Agency Volume 1: The Begum's Jewels.

Our hero, Atom Vercorian is a struggling detective (is there any other kind?), who along with his sidekick Mimi, investigates cheating husbands. But they dream of something much more meaningful. So when The Begum, (aka the wife of the world's richest man, the Aga Khan), has per priceless jewels stolen, then Atom looks for a chance to make a name for himself and his agency. Recruiting former wrestler Jojo Top as their 'muscle' (however he prefers to be seen as a partner after helping them out financially) Atom and co are taken all over France in search of the missing jewels, crossing paths with sleazy gangsters and an enigmatic femme fatale know as the Red Panther.

Atom Agency is a glorious Gallic thrill ride. Set in the late 1940s it is packed with vintage Franco-Belgian chic, from the clothes to the cars to the glorious locations. It's set in an idealistic world of gangsters and molls and tough guy wrestlers, which lacks the irony and cynicism of the present day and feels more like a crime noir version of Tintin as a result. (But with extra violence!)

Atom is a fantastic hero with his powerful Armenian eye brows, yet it is the supporting cast who are the stars.

"Densely panelled pages make every spread a glorious and frenetic delight that draws you in"

From plucky sidekick Mimi, who is more than just a damsel in distress to the powerful Jojo who is like a cerebral Hulk or smart Ben Grimm style ally.

Every page is packed with intricately conceived panels, thanks to Schwartz's exquisite artwork. He is a master of that Gallic style that sees highly cartoonish characters exist in a beautifully rendered world that manages to blur the line between these two disparate styles, creating something impeccably cool. With the detail and personality of Asterix's Uderzo, but the grittiness of Darwyn Cooke this is more than just a twee attempt at a Gallic crime story.

With more text and detail in a single page than some comics manage in a three issue run, it's a dense read. While the story may sometimes leap around a bit too much for our liking, the strength of the characters and the quality of the artwork powers it forward.

Atom Agency Volume 1: The Begum's Jewels is thoroughly wonderful read, that will have you eager for more from the minute you reach the final panel.

Killtopia #2

Publisher: BHP Comics
Writer: Dave Cook
Artist: Craig Paton
Price: £8.99 from BHP Comics

The first issue of this dystopian blockbuster was part of our top 10 comics of 2018 and this follow up continues to build on the epic world.

Set in a near future Japanese mega city where 'wrecker's' hunt down rogue mechs for money and fame, the first issue followed Shinji, a trainee wrecker who encounters Crash the first sentient mech. With superstar wreckers, Yakuza gangs and android killers on their trail, Shinji must escape from Killtopia and save Crash and also his sister.

After the bombastic introduction of the first issue, Killtopia #2 is a much more considered and slower paced read. It still features all the fantastic elements which made Killtopia such a great book - outlandish characters, all powerful mechs and a smart sense of humour - but this issue is much more about consolidating the concepts and fleshing out the characters from the first issue rather than adding in a whole load more. It's a slightly slower paced read as a result, but is a better experience overall as a result.

Visually, Killtopia continues to be astounding. Paton's artwork channels Frank Quitely and Geof Darrow, with it's intricate detail, as well concepts from Japanese video games, manga and movies to create a glorious hybrid. The neon colours make every page feel other worldly, while you can tell he and Cook revel in the amount of small detail and hidden jokes in every panel.

Killtopia continues to be a shining beacon in small press/indie comics, that is reaching for the neon coloured skies and aiming to be as good as anything released by a major publisher. And with this issue is doing just that!

Plagued Volume 3

Publisher: BHP Comics
Writer: Gary Chudleigh
Artist: Tanya Roberts
Price: £8.99 from bhpcomics.squarespace.com/buy-books

Set in a world where witches are blamed for a deadly epidemic, the third and final volume of Plagued sees former witch hunter Mackie and his pal Miranda take on Salem: The Greatest Witch-finder. He is looking to demonise witches even more after learning Miranda has a cure to the epidemic. Our heroes join forth with the enigmatic White Thorn Coven aka Miranda's old war buddies, and form an uneasy alliance.

Plagued is a fun and enjoyable read, that is perfect for a young teen audience. With themes of friendship and doing the right thing in adversity as the core it has a great heart. It's action packed and frequently hilarious too. Tanya Roberts' artwork continues to improve and she make the world of Plagued her own.

While the story for this final volume is relatively basic, there is still enough depth and edge to the story that it is not completely lightweight and throwaway. And so leaves Plagued as a series in fine health.

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Legend of La Mariposa: The Demon Gauntlet

Publisher: James Lawrence
Writer/Artist: James Lawrence
Price: Now funding on Kickstarter

We've been long-time fans of James Lawrence's awesome webcomic, but it is now collected into one glorious print edition and we really get the chance to experience the full force of the pint sized pugilist and her quest to find the masks of four demons!

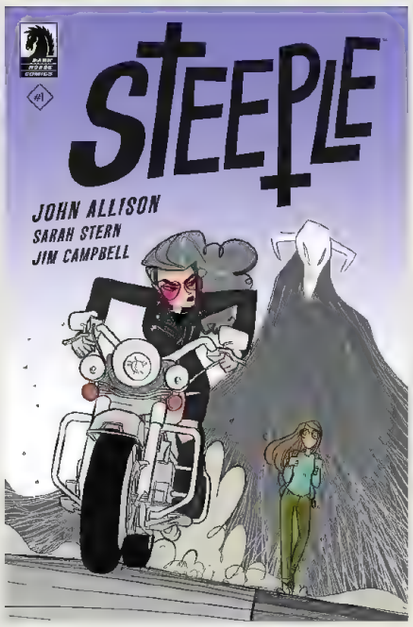
La Mariposa is a luchador (or masked Mexican wrestler) and she wants to join up with the legendary group of heroes known as the Sons Of Justice . As part of an initiation test the Sons send her on a mission to defeat four demonic luchadors and claim their masks. But can the idealistic La Mariposa defeat the demons or will she be a victim of the Son's dangerous hazing.

Although it has a wrestling theme at its heart, The Legend of La Mariposa feels much more like a superhero comic combined with a Saturday morning cartoon, In another words it's an adrenaline rush of action and mayhem!

With the bright and colourful masks and costumes of Lucha Libra at its core, The Legend of La Mariposa is a gorgeous read and Lawrence is clearly revelling in the world he has created.

La Mariposa is an inspired lead character. Her slightly stocky/pear shaped figure makes her feel like something much more interesting than your usual stick thin, big boobed superhero female and so she is a fantastically aspirational character for young girls, while not being too girly to put off young boys and we love that.

In fact we would go so far as to say, La Mariposa is a perfect all ages comic and would be a perfect fit for a major publisher or in The Phoenix. It is also up there as one of our all time favourite wrestling comics, and is more than deserving of main event status!



Steeple

Publisher: Dark Horse Comics
Writer: John Allison
Artist: John Allison, Sarah Stern
Price: £2.49 at Comixology

There are few things better in comics than a new book from Giant Days' creator John Allison.

Steeple sees a young cleric, Billie, head to Cornwall and unwittingly get caught up in a battle between heaven and hell. Along the way she encounters the enigmatic Maggie Warren whose loyalties will be the core of this unlikely buddy comedy.

On the surface, this may sound like it's a hybrid of Poldark and Hellboy, but don't worry, it's still packed with all the usual Allison hallmarks. The book is powered along by his fantastic eye for detail in his characters (Billie is like an awkward rabbit in headlights while Maggie is all vampish hair and black leather) as well as his ear for wonderful dialogue. The unlikely friendship between these two is an Allison staple and is used to perfection in Steeple

Allison balances the humour of his characters, with the more monstrous sub-plots without ever diminishing either and as such makes for another glorious read that will delight new and long term fans alike.

"It's about how important music is to keeping your soul and head together"

We talk music and comics in **Hitsville UK** with writer **Dan Cox**

One of small press comics best kept secrets, Dan Cox and John Riordan's Hitsville UK, is being collected into one glorious collector's volume. To find out more about this brilliantly weird look at the world of grass roots music, we caught up writer Dan to find out more!

For those new to Hitsville UK, how would you sum it up?

Dan Cox: The pitch is it's a "surreal love-letter to the weirder corners of pop music, following the misadventures of a motley assortment of bands as they try to make it big. It's the best, though possibly the only, musical-pop-art-soap-opera in comic book form."

It's a real carnival of a book, we still struggle to describe it. We've got this collection of angel-voiced grotesque, monster-hunters, imaginary robots, hip-hop agitators, faded 80s starlets, 60s throwbacks, drug-addled producers and demonic accountants and we bounce them off each other. There's horror, there's political satire, there's kitchen sink drama, there's grand psychedelic action sequences. And it's funny!

What inspired you to start Hitsville UK?

DC: At its core it's about that desperate urge to make something and change your world. And about how important music is to keeping your soul and head together. How when you're poor and lonely and living in a bedsit and the world has gone mad there's 2 minutes and 30 seconds of pop that can transform your reality.

Hitsville is packed with musical references, including covers based on famous albums

Is it just a comic for music fans?

DC: You don't have to be a massive music fan to enjoy it. We're not snobby, there's no gate-keeping, there's references for people to spot but they don't interfere with the story. Actually, we had to take most of the references out to avoid being sued! If anyone does spot a reference that escaped please don't mention it.

You have a very eclectic bunch of characters, who was your favourite?

DC: I pretty much loved them all. The concept was, each one had to be strong enough to hold their own strip. The original idea is that it would be like an anthology of different bands/strips that would then break in to each other's stories. Greg Pastis the hopped-up super-producer based on Joe Meek, Phil Spector, and a DJ I used to work with on local radio was always fun to write. But all the characters took on their own lives very quickly. The most surprising were The Sisters, they were created as a foil for another band, a one-off joke, that we kept repeating, till we wove them into the storyline and we discovered this dark tragedy hidden in the centre of all the wild and wacky shenanigans.

You can find out more about the series at www.hitsvilleukcomic.com.

The Plot

Publisher: Vault Comics
Writer: Tim Daniel, Michael Moreci
Artist: Joshua Hixson,
Price: £2.49 from ComiXology

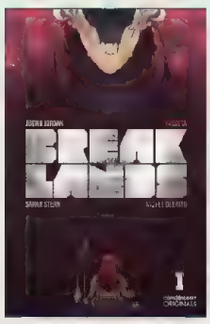
Vault Comics are having a stellar 2019 and every month we are treated to a superb new title. Joining the likes of Resonant and Test is this creepy paranormal tale about a family who are tormented by a sinister Swamp Thing like monster.

When their parents are murdered, teenagers McKenzie and Zach are sent to live with their estranged uncle Chase in the family home - it's a Gothic run down mansion in the middle of nowhere which sets up a classic haunted house vibe for this tale of unhappy families.

Writers Tim Daniel and Michael Moreci have create a superbly creepy world for their character to inhabit, from the sinister family house to the mysterious monster who is tormenting the Blaine family. The whole thing is told with some exquisitely stylish artwork from Joshua Hixson which has the characterisation or Sean Philips mixed with the iconic simplicity of David Aja. It's all rounded off with dirty and murky colour scheme from Jordan Boyd which gives it an organic and muddy feel that goes perfectly with the creepy lead monster. It also makes it feel quite old fashioned (in a good way) making The Plot feel like a forgotten Vertigo title from the late 80s. With the creepy under currents of a classic Hammer Horror or EC Comic story and an iconic villain, this is set to be one of Vault's best books of the year!

Break Lands

Publisher: ComiXology Originals
Writer: Justin Jordan
Artist: Tyasetta
Price: £2.49 at Comixology



The latest from ComiXology's Originals stable, Breaklands is packed with potential, in a world of powerful villains and plucky bow-wielding heroines.

It starts with the terrifying overlord who looks like Thanos in Transformer cosplay tearing one of his subjects to pieces. This is then contrasted with the world of Adam and his sister Kasa Fain, your classic orphans who must fend for themselves in a world where everyone has powers – except Kasa. But it's OK because she is a kick ass archer! When Adam is ambushed by a group of Mad Max style villains in flying cars, she must fight to save her brother, but can she manage without powers?!

With an almost literal cliff hanger ending, this first issue of Breaklands seems to end just as it is getting going. You finally have a grip on the characters, and their motivations and it's over. Fortunately, the characters are solid enough by the end, especially Kasa, and like stable-mate Delver this feels like a book with plenty of potential.

Justin Jordan's story is realised by some incredible art from the enigmatic Tyasetta. The landscapes and world building are just incredible, flitting from a dark main city to beautiful forest landscapes which has this lightness and vibrancy to the colours which makes it really stand out. While some of the characters, like the skull faced bear are as beautiful as they are terrifying.

Omni

Publisher: Humanoids/H1 Comics
Writer: Devin Grayson
Artist: Kev Sherry
Price: £5.49 from ComiXology

Humanoids continue to develop their new Ignited universe, with the story of Dr Cecelia Cobbina, a physician in Africa. Who acquires the power of knowing everything. Along with her assistant, Mae they set out to find others who have ignited and help them with their new abilities.

Unlike previous Ignited books, Omni lays out it's characters and their abilities from the start and is more about the dynamic between Cecelia and Mae than their powers. The cold and clinical Cecilia contrasts well with the more impulsive Mae and looks set to create a really strong odd couple dynamic. While the unique nature of Cecilia's powers looks set to open up some really interesting concepts for future stories,.

Artist Alitha E. Martinez gives the book a strong, almost house style for the H1 comics which is sharp and polished, but with enough originality to help it stand out from the crowd.

While not as impactful as Ignited, Omni looks to be an important part of the H1 universe with the potential to be something all knowing.

"It's a genre that champions young girls and femininity"

Olivia Hicks & Emma Oosterhous talk magical girls, sports comics and queer romance in **Grand Slam Romance**

We love the over the top mix of sport manga and romance in Olivia Hicks' and Emma Oosterhous' all action Grand Slam Romance. Keen to find out more about the secrets of great romance comics, and their link to sports comics, we caught up with Emma and Olivia to find out more!

Tell us a bit about the inspiration for Grand Slam Romance?

Olivia Hicks: The main inspiration was that Emma and I wanted to work together! We both brought different ideas of what our dream collaboration comic would be – I was very much in the sports corner, and Emma wanted to do something with magical girls. We thought it would be fun to throw those two ideas together – sort of what if there's this crazy overpowered magical girl existing in a world where everyone else is still normal? But the priority was always that the story would be queer and would be created with queer women specifically in mind.

Emma Oosterhous: This comic has a lot of my favourite things in it: romance, sparkles, banter, magic, ridiculous outfits, a grey-haired middle-aged butch woman, the colour pink, and girls. Everything I do is about and for girls. I've wanted to do a magical girl story for a long time because it's a genre that champions young girls and femininity without necessarily pushing harmful beauty ideals or suggesting that a woman's power lies in her ability to seduce men.

HERE COMES THE PITCH!
OOH, IT'S A CURVE BALL!
LET'S CUT A DEAL SHORT STUFF YOU MISS THIS SHOT, I'LL TAKE YOU OUT FOR CHILLI CHEESE FRIES
WHACK
HNNGG!!!
MY WORD, WHAT A HIT! AND SHE'S ROUNDING THE BASES!!
GO, MICKEY!

Grand Slam Romance sees rivalry on the softball field turn to romance off the field!

What's the appeal of sports comics?

OH: I think sports have a lot of homo-eroticism in them. They have all this macho masculinity attached to them and the fans, but when you look at the sport itself, its all about team work and touching butts and its seems pretty queer to me, a queer woman who has never played a sport. Sport is hyper-focused on the body; how it interacts with sports paraphernalia or how it interacts with other bodies, and I think a lot of emotional and sexual tension can be poured into those moments.

And why make it a romance too?

EO: We based the main conflict of Grand Slam Romance around the rivals-to-lovers trope, which is obviously romantic and also fits naturally within a sports framework. A lot of gay romance (typically written by straight people) uses this trope under the assumption that the love is forbidden because of homophobia. But I know that lots of queer readers, myself included, are tired of having homophobia be the main conflict of a gay romance story. So here we have a forbidden lovers scenario, but for a completely different reason – they're on rival softball teams. It's a much more fun and hopeful take on queer romance than what I grew up reading.

You can get Grand Slam Romance from https://gumroad.com/l/kPzX

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Glass Hood

Publisher: LabRat Comics
Writer: Matt Garvey
Artist: Grayham Puttock, Stefano Pavan, Michael Rea
Price: £6 from mattgarvey.bigcartel.com

Yet another Matt Garvey comic! This one is the spiritual follow up to last year's award winning Red Rocket Comet and again features a hero and villain reuniting one last time for a story that is told in two distinct styles.

Victor Day is former villain Glass Hood, and having finished his 20 year prison sentence is out for revenge on the man who put him away - Commander Justice, a.k.a. Maxwell Marshall. Our story begins with Day holding his former nemesis at gunpoint in a graveyard in the black of night, but what is Victor's ultimate plan for Max and what could have happened back in the day to have brought them both to this place?

As with Red Rocket Comet, Garvey effortlessly weaves multiple stories, genres and timeliness together to create something really fantastic. One minute we get a dark and gritty noir story set in the present day, with super moody art from RRC's Grayham Puttock. While on the next page we get a flash back to see Victor and Max in their prime, in a more silver age story with vintage artwork from Garvey-verse newcomer Stefano Pavan.

It's a format that works really well, especially in the superhero genre, and in both scenarios Garvey and his artists produce really strong work. While it doesn't quite reach the same dazzling heights as RRC, that was always going to be a tough act to follow. However, the Glass Hood is still a very smartly conceived and compellingly told story from a group of creators who are producing really interesting and original comics.

Transmissions

Publisher: TPub Comics
Writer: Jed McPherson
Artist: Marco Perugini
Price: TBC from TPub Comics

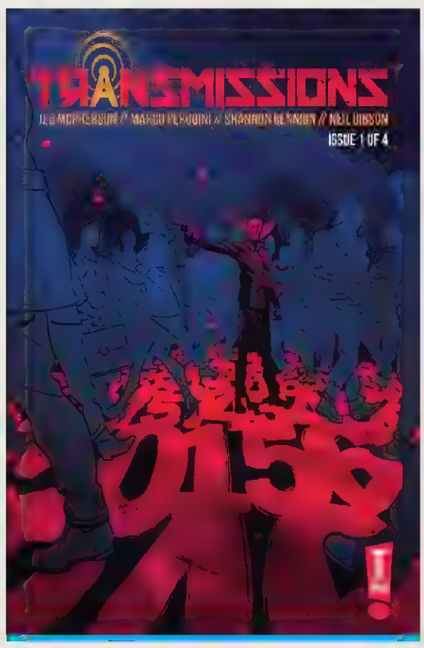
This tense Cold War infused spy thriller sees Jed McPherson (The Show) combine with publisher TPub (The Theory) to bring us a taught tale of spies activated by Russian radio transmission

Government agent Charlie Stratford investigates a shooting at a bank only to discover the killer may have been activated by a defunct Russian code. Along with a GCHQ codebreaker and an ageing Russian spy, he must crack the fatal code.

This is a brilliantly paced debut, that introduces the quite complex concept brilliantly, posing enough questions to have readers guessing.

The plot feels very like a John Le Carré or Tom Clancy novel, and McPherson builds the story very cleverly. Meanwhile artist Marco Perugini has a very stylish almost vintage look to the art with shades of Sean Philips or Paul Moore giving the book the mix of gritty stylish realism.

Transmissions is an incredibly strong debut and If it resolves itself as well as we hope then this is a book worthy of future transmissions!



SMALL PRESS SPOTLIGHT

We look at some recent success stories from Kickstarter

With cosplay now a firm fixture at every comic convention, Lou Scannon creator Dan Harris looks to cross the streams of comics culture, with his new book **The Cosplayer That Doomed The Earth**. Griff grew up worshipping classic video game Captain Aequitas. A regular comic con attendee, he decides to bite the bullet and cosplay for the first time as his video game idol. However when the convention is interrupted by alien invaders, they mistake him for the real Captain Aequitas. All of which is compounded further when Aequitas' team the Veritas Squad turn up to help him out. This is a fantastically fun slice of classic all ages comics. The concept is your classic 'mistaken identity' trope that we've seen many times before, but giving it the cosplay angle certainly helps freshen it up. Harris gives the whole thing a really light and funny feel to it, with the same kind of humour and gags which we loved in Lou Scannon – but with a bit more of an all ages tone to it. (It would be a perfect fit in the Fairspark Book roster for example). He also supplies the artwork which is colourful and packed full of fun characterisation, reminding us of Tanya Roberts work on the brilliant Plagued series. While the plot is a little light and frothy, and fairly predictable, this is one of those books which is built around convention and playing up to reader's expectation and so trying to reinvent the genre and subvert those expectations would just leave you feeling underwhelmed. In the same way that we loved Andy Clift's Captain Cosmic for its unashamed love of its subject matter, The Cosplayer That Doomed The Earth is a fantastically fun read which will have you laughing and smiling from the first page to the last.

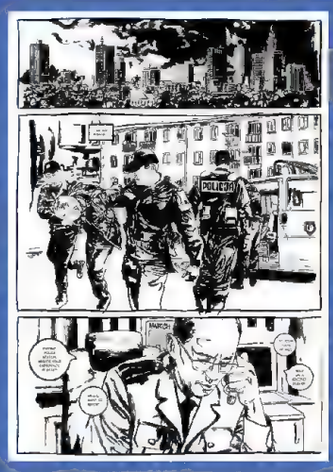
After the success of his first chapter of this aliens in Victorian England adventure, Samuel George London is back and this time Alfie and Mary are a long way from their quaint English village. Soaring through space , they encounter more alien life and are taken aboard an alien starship where they meet Queen Narsuma and her gruff security adviser Rongarra. As they are recruited to help negotiate an intergalactic treaty, people begin to cross and double cross each other, but can Alfie and Mary survive in the scary new world. While we enjoyed the first Milford Green book for its original concept, it lacked a certain something, however this second volume feels much more confident in tone and like a story where the writer is really beginning to find his voice. It's not perfect, and the story feels a bit overly long in places, however it definitely feels a more complete work that the first volume. Visually it is also a real step up with artist Mikael Hankonen no longer having to draw quaint English villages and can instead cut loose with crazy spaceships and aliens, which much better suit his tight and intricate style. A really fun, albeit slightly lightweight, second issue, however it is a great chance to see characters and creators grow in confidence and this is starting to feel like a really strong series that has more depth than is that first issue might have suggested.

The new book from Alex Automatic's Fraser Campbell, is quite a departure from his previous more mature work. **Heart of Steal** tells the story of Toni Doinel, a teenage cat-burglar who makes a daring raid on her home-town's biggest gang lord in order to acquire an item which could make all the difference in saving her little brother's life. However, this job turns out not to be as easy as Toni hoped when her two oldest and best friends, cop Oscar and gangster Michael, begin their chase in order to catch her. The first issue of Heart of Steal is a fast paced story which plays out like a chase scenes from a video games like Grand Theft Auto. The characters are lots of fun with Toni having a robin hood with a heart of gold vibe to her, while Michael and Oscar work as great foils to her impulsive action.

Artist Katie Fleming does a great job of imbue the visuals with a light-heartedness which helps with the enjoyment of the story and makes Heart of Steal into a really enjoyable comic. A simple premise, beautiful art mixed with a sense of fun and some cool characters - not to mention an intriguing cliffhanger, means readers will want to come back for another dose of cat-burglarizing escapades.

EURO SCENE

EUROPEAN COMIC REVIEWS



Title: Noir
Script: Łukasz Bogacz and Wojciech Stefaniec
Artwork: Wojciech Stefaniec
Publisher: Europe Comics
Price: €17.47

We continue our exploration of Polish comics with Łukasz Bogacz and Wojciech Stefaniec's award winning crime thriller Noir.

Stefaniec is a two time Artist of the Year winner in Poland (2017 and 2019) and previously collaborated with author Satyrek on Comix Back to Me Again (also Europe Comics). Bogacz is an IT specialist who writes comics scripts in his free time.

Noir is a 118 page crime thriller which revolves around a single family, a father, his two sons and one of the son's wives.

Fittingly, it is in black and white and the story focuses on the two rival siblings. Robert is a successful writer while his brother Oskar is a bit of a lay about. Is Robert's wife is a surgeon. Their father is a policeman.

It is split in to three chapters and the story moves along mostly Robert gets too involved in his own writing and conducts a similar crime. Wojciech cleverly portrays Robert's psychological state through scrambled imagery.

The artwork is typical of continental comics with lots of fine detail in all the panels especially in the background. The pair write carefully and the story has clear structure which makes it so easy to follow and enjoy.

Title: Beneficio
Author: Krysztof Gawronkiewicz and Michał Kalicki
Publisher: Timof

Beneficio is another Polish comic and it tells the story of a girl who wanders off into the wilderness from her native Warsaw to be alone, away from people and with her thoughts.

She escapes to a place called Beneficio where she philosophises on the minuatae of life such as smoke streaming straight up into the sky as seen in between two mountain tops.

There appears to be no goal other than to be alone although thoughts of her deceased grandma regular make her consider life back in the 'civilised' world.

Krysztof Gawronkiewicz and Michał Kalicki's production is short and simply drawn. The detail is neither intrinsic nor is the colour bountiful but it succeeds in portraying the idea of solitude the protagonist both seeks and suffers from.

Rocks become dogs as our solitary character muses over her life in the desolate land she has chosen to live in. Will she lose her mind or will she keep it together? It is an interesting take on life experience if you enjoy philosophy yourself.

Title: The Last of the Atlases Chapter 1
Script: Fabian Vehlmann and Gwen De Bonneval
Artwork: Hervé Tanquerelle
Publisher: Europe Comics
Price: €2.49

The Last of the Atlases Chapter 1 is the first in (currently) a five part series of short comic thrillers, each one leading on to the next.

Originally taken on by the Dupuis publishing house in Belgium, Europe comics have translated the series into English.

Scriptwriter Fabian Velhmann has had previous success with Green Manor, also published by Dupuis, after having been initially rejected by legendary Belgian comic Spirou.

Artist Hervé Tanquerelle hails from Nantes where part of this intriguing thriller is set.

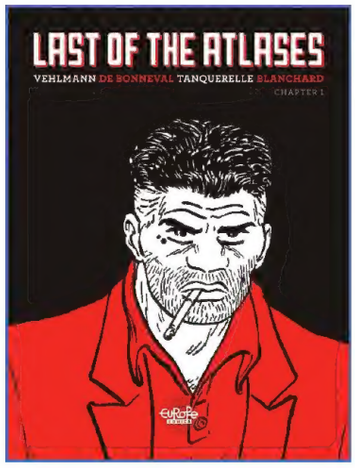
We set off with two people puzzled by the bird migration habits to be then thrown into a local betting machine racket.

The Last of the Atlases is a very colourful comic set in modern day France and Algeria. Each chapter leaves you wanting to know more so you inherently indulge in the following installment.

They are short too, leaving you the option to read it all in one go or over a prolonged period of time.

It's a mixture of crime and science intertwined through our protagonist Ismaël. He goes from small time racketeer to being thrown into an international crime racket. At the same time, a natural phenomenon appears to be taking shape near in the Algerian desert.

We look forward to finding out what becomes of Ismaël as the police close in on him and seeing more of these creators' work being published in English.



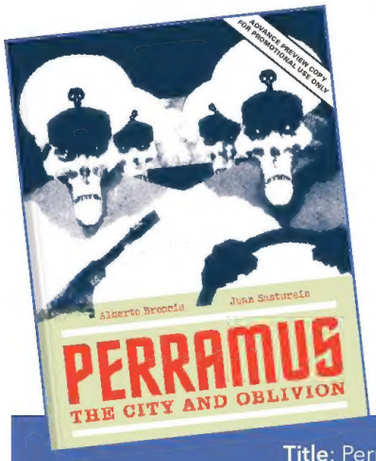
Title: Tout Cul Nul
Script: Anne Baraou
Artwork: Fanny Dalle-Rive
Publisher: Éditions Cornélius
Price: €22

Tout Cul Nul (Totally Naked) is a compilation of humorous strip comics drawn by Fanny Dalle-Rive and written by Anne Baraou and is a follow up to their earlier collaborations Cul Nul and Cul Nul Encore.

It is made up of realistic sex stories that people may have experienced at some point in their lives. Dalle-Rive and Baraou err on the funny side of how many of these encounters can end up in some sort of failure of dissatisfaction.

Dalle-Rive's drawings are simple pencil drawn on white paper style. The lack of colour depersonalises the experiences and so they can be attributed to anyone, allowing the reader to better associate with them.

Tout Cul Nul is easy and fun to read. If gives us a humoristic window into the French view on sex and love lives. As it is split down into numbered strips you can read as little or as much as you want in one sitting!



Title: Perramus1 **Publisher:** AM Books **Authors:** Alberto Breccia & Juan Sasturain **Price:** £32.54

Perramus is the pièce de résistance of Argentinian comics legend Alberto Breccia. This is a compilation of his work Perramus, a critique of oppressive and totalitarian states, particularly influenced by his native Argentina and other states in South America, which have suffered similar regimes at points in their history.

Perramus is a colloquial term for a 'raincoat' from which our main, otherwise unnamed, protagonist takes his name when he acquires a jacket second hand from a prostitute. He is suffering from severe memory loss and is hoping to escape the terrible situation he finds himself in with a Uruguayan companion, Canelones.

We follow Perramus on his tortured adventure through which Breccia and Juan Sasturain lay down their critique with the assistance of journalist Sasturain's words from newspaper reports he wrote during his career as a journalist and writer.

Perramus was originally released in the 1980s as a series of strips in Fierro, an Argentinian comics magazine, and is being published in English for the first time next year.

It was awarded a prize by Amnesty international and is sure to be a massive hit on these shores too.

Author: Thomas Sargent | **Twitter:** @nousrembobinons

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WATCHMEN

With HBO's new version of Watchmen **soon to hit the small screen, Chris Hallam** takes a look back at the story so far…

First there is Edward Blake, aka The Comedian. A murderer, rapist and a widely respected national hero, the Comedian has transformed the course of post-war US history, preventing the Watergate Scandal and helping to win the Vietnam War. Then, there is a Rorschach, a sinister masked vigilante with a troubled past and an uncertain future. Then there's Dr Manhattan, once a scientist now transformed into a blue all-powerful superhuman by a horrendous accident. In 1960, his creation was announced to an excited Cold War world by a breathless announcer: "The superman exists and he's American." Then there is Adrian Veidt, a business tycoon nicknamed "the smartest man on the planet." Known as Ozymandias, he is the most liberal of the superheroes but also has dark plans of his own. Then there are the "good guys," the Nite Owl and the Silk Spectre.

These are just the principle stars of the Watchmen, which over thirty years after it was first created, remains a pivotal defining moment in comics and graphic novel history.

Origin story

It is a story about many things but to start with, it is a story about superheroes. In the early 1980s, DC Comics bought a line of established Charlton Comics characters, dating back to the 1940s. With British writer Alan Moore already a rising star following his successful revitalisation of the Marvelman legend for Warrior, the original idea was for Moore to create a new darker story incorporating the Charlton Heroes. Moore's initial proposal, 'Who Killed the Peacemaker?' did just that. In the end, however, it was decided that Moore would only use the Charlton Heroes as a loose template for characters he would create himself. This ultimately formed the basis for his and Dave Gibbons' Watchmen, one of the most successful comic stories ever produced. The sheer scale of Moore and Gibbons' ambition as it was revealed, blew readers away.

Watchmen incorporated alternative histories, Cold War politics, alternative pirate comic narratives, visual puns and a breath-taking magnitude of allusions and references unseen in the medium before, indeed too much to adequately detail here.

Comics would never be the same again.

Watching the Watchmen

With the comic such a hit, thoughts inevitably turned to adapting the story for the big screen. Former Monty Python star, Terry Gilliam originally planned to direct a Watchman film in the 1980s. There was exciting talk of Arnold Schwarzenegger going blue to play Dr. Manhattan, the late Robin Williams playing Rorschach, Richard Gere dressing up as the Nite Owl and Jamie Lee Curtis becoming the Silver Spectre. Ultimately, however, the film

became just another unrealised Gilliam project, after the Brazil director grew unhappy with Sam Hamm's script.

By the 21st century, comic book adaptations were everywhere and while Alan Moore was by now, incredibly hostile to any adaptations of his work, following the box office success of film versions of From Hell, The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen and V For Vendetta, a Watchmen film directed by Zack Snyder was greenlit for a 2009 release. Unlike the planned 1980s version, the new film featured few big star names (for example, Matthew Goode played Ozymandias while Jeffery Dean Morgan was the Comedian).

The results as with the V for Vendetta film, were broadly successful, though divided opinion. Many fans appreciated the film's cleverly constructed opening title sequence, for example, and felt the scenes detailing Jon Osterman's (Billy Crudup) first transformation into Dr Manhattan were very well-handled.

For simplicity's sake, an animated adaptation of the comic Tales of the Black Freighter was produced separately as a DVD. For those who fancied it, it was later

incorporated into the events of the film (as it is in the original Watchmen), creating an extended three and a half hour film as part of an Ultimate Cut DVD.

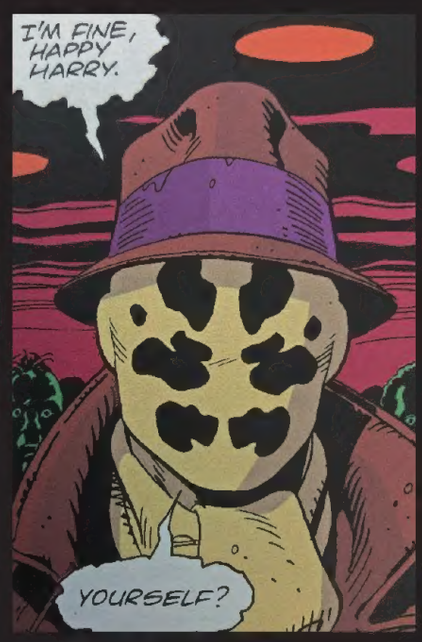
Other elements pleased fans less, however, and though perhaps the best of the Alan Moore adaptations, commercially Watchman was a disappointment.

One man in Northampton was particularly displeased with the film. Writer Alan Moore, by now, in a state of total contempt for the machinations of Hollywood, as before, asked for his name to be removed from the film and gave his fee to artist Dave Gibbons. Moore is believed not to have seen the film to this day.

Prequels and sequels

Despite Alan Moore's continued opposition, in the 21st century, a number of comics have attempted to develop the story of Watchmen further. Starting in 2012, DCs Before Watchmen ran for 37 issues and brought together a number of writers and artists to detail the back stories of nine Watchmen characters. Alan Moore was again not keen stating that: "if they said that ten years ago, when I asked them for that, then yeah it might have worked ... But these days I don't want Watchmen back. Certainly, I don't want it back under those kinds of terms."

Original artist Dave Gibbons was more positive, however, arguing: "The original series of Watchmen is the complete story that Alan Moore and I wanted to tell. However, I appreciate DC's reasons for this initiative and the wish of the artists and writers involved to pay tribute to our work. May these new additions have the success they desire."



In 2013, Moore's position on the prequels hardened. "If people do want to go out and buy these Watchmen prequels, they would be doing me an enormous favour if they would just stop buying my other books," he said. "I can't do anything legal about Before Watchmen so I'm going to try and guilt tripping people into not buying it: I would hope that you wouldn't want to buy a book knowing that its author actually had complete contempt for you. So, I'm hoping that will be enough." In the end, despite Moore's hostility, the venture was a moderate success for DC.

Since 2017, DC has been running Doomsday Clock, a comic series which serves as a direct sequel to Watchmen while incorporating other characters from the DC Universe. The comics form part of the wider DC Rebirth campaign and have been generally well received.

Nothing ever ends

In 2018, HBO announced that Damon Lindelof, the man behind TV's The Leftovers had been commissioned to write Watchmen TV series due out on the October 20, 2019. The series will feature Regina King, Tm Blake Nelson, Jeremy Irons and Don Johnson.

It seems thirty years after the end of the original comic ended, Watchman continues to inspire writers and artists. Whatever the hopes and wishes of creator, Alan Moore, rightly or wrongly, Watchmen may run for some time yet.

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